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On the cover:

Tulips including 'Tambour Maitre' at Sarah Raven's garden at Perch Hill in Sussex (*see her tulip offer on page 91*).
Photograph: Jonathan Buckley

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Grasses and late-flowering perennials are coming into their own, and we celebrate their fantastic displays in our gardens this issue


JOHN CAMPBELL

September can be a really mellow month in the garden, a time to enjoy the fruits of the harvest and take note of the things that went right, and wrong, in the borders this season. Grasses and late-flowering perennials are coming into their own, and we celebrate their FANTASTIC DISPLAYS in our gardens this issue.

First we visit the winner of the Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden competition, Ellicar near Doncaster (*page 20*). This family garden is host to a fabulous swimming pond and a menagerie of animals, and its inventive creator Sarah Murch already has plans in mind for more new plantings and areas. Garden writer Noel Kingsbury also opens his gates to us this month, revealing the home plot where he tries out new combinations and planting mixes (*page 45*); and there's plenty of LATE-SEASON LOVELINESS going on at the gardens of Bay Tree House (*page 28*) and Grendon Court (*page 36*).

There lots of INSPIRATION FOR BORDERS with a long season of interest in our Anatomy of a Border feature, where Inner Temple head gardener Andrea Brunsendorf gives top tips on building great schemes that last for months (*page 61*); and we peek inside an exceptional city courtyard by designer Stephen Woodhams, who has created an AMAZING GARDEN that's somehow a roof garden at ground level (*page 53*). You'll also find great advice from RHS Chelsea Gold medallist Marcus Barnett on choosing and placing sculpture in the garden (*page 59*); expert tips on autumn lawn care (*page 81*); and a guide to choosing the right hard landscaping (*page 68*).

There's OODLES OF PLANTS too, from easy-care asters (*page 87*) to the superstar plants that will grow just about anywhere (*page 95*), and a fantastic offer from Sarah Raven of £5 off her top tulip collections - turn to page 91 now to order yours!

Stephanie

Stephanie Mahon, Editor

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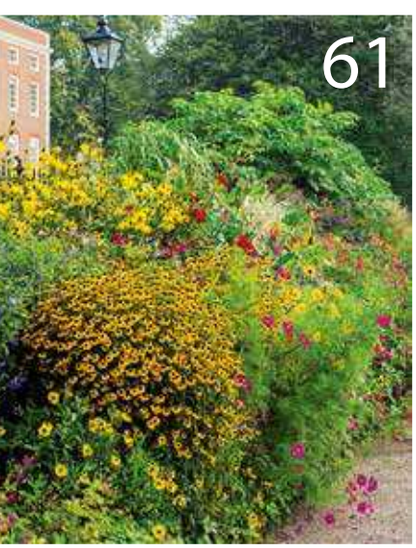
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A JACOBEAN TREAT

Chastleton House is a hidden gem in Oxfordshire, providing a wonderful day out for all the family. You may recognise the house and outdoor space from the recent BBC production of *Wolf Hall*, taking us back in time to tell the life story of Thomas Cromwell. You can enjoy a special exhibition of behind-the-scenes photographs from the series during your visit.

The garden still largely has a Jacobean layout, with divisions according to use. 'September is a month of harvest and dahlias in the kitchen garden,' explains garden supervisor Rosy Sutton. 'We are lucky to have rich loamy soil, which provides us with amazing produce, from pumpkins to cut flowers. The borders that were once full of roses are now brimming with asters, echinaceas, solidago and eupatorium.' From April to September, you can also enjoy a game of croquet on the lawns where the rules of the game were invented.

Chastleton House's garden will open in aid of the NGS on 6 September 12.30-5pm, and will also host weekend 'pick your own' apple sessions this month. 'If you're lucky, you might even catch the last few mulberries on our 400-year-old tree,' says Rosy. Free garden tours are available. Chastleton, near Moreton-in-Marsh, Oxfordshire GL56 0SU. Tel: +44 (0)1494 755560. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

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NEWS & EVENTS

Sue Bradley digs up the latest stories, including Heritage Open Days, a Garden Museum collection and great events for your diary

Easy days



Sit back and enjoy the last days of summer in this captivating rabbit and cabbage deckchair from London-based Thornback & Peel. It has a 100% cotton canvas sling and a solid hardwood frame and costs £135. www.thornbackandpeel.co.uk



5 gardens to enjoy the fruits of the harvest

CLUMBER PARK, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Experience a taste of the past by heading to the Clumber café to sample dishes made from fruit and veg grown in the walled kitchen garden, which once supplied the household of the Duke of Newcastle. Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 3AZ. Tel: +44 (0)1909 544917. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

KNIGHTSHAYES, DEVON
Light lunches and home-made cakes are on the ever-changing menu at Knightshayes' Stables Café. Cooks use freshly picked organic produce from the National Trust property's walled gardens and nearby farms. Bolham, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7RQ. Tel: +44 (0)1884 254665. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

PAINSWICK ROCOCO GARDEN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Enjoy the sight of heritage fruit ripening in the sun, see the newly harvested vegetables and then head for the restaurant to make your choice from a menu based around produce picked and harvested from the garden. Painswick, Gloucestershire GL6 6TH. Tel: +44 (0)1452 813204. www.rococogarden.org.uk

THE LOST GARDENS OF HELIGAN, CORNWALL
Admire a harvest display of vegetables and fruits from Heligan's restored Victorian productive gardens, and sample home-made seasonal dishes at its tearooms and restaurant. Pentewan, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6EN. Tel: +44 (0)1726 845100. www.heligan.com

RHS GARDEN WISLEY, SURREY
Fruit and vegetables grown at the Royal Horticultural Society's flagship Wisley garden in Surrey (*above*) feature in the ingredients used in dishes served at its restaurant, food hall and glasshouse café. Wisley, Surrey. Tel: 0845 2609000. www.rhs.org.uk



Horticultural heritage

Dilston Physic Garden in Northumberland, the Jellicoe roof garden in Guildford and Painshill in Surrey (*left*) are among the horticultural highlights taking part in this year's Heritage Open Days. The free four-day festival between Thursday 10 and Sunday 13 September provides opportunities for the public to explore a variety of places, including several that are not often open to the general public. For a full list of gardens open as part of Heritage Open Days, visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk →

IMAGES/RHS GARDEN WISLEY - CAROL SHEPPARD/RHS PAINSHILL - FRED HOLMES



Summer loving in Cornwall

Enjoy a screening of one of the world's favourite sing-along films in the stunning grounds of Pentillie Castle, located on the banks of the River Tamar in Cornwall. *Grease* will be shown on the old tennis lawn on Wednesday 16 September, with the garden opening at 6pm and the film screened from 8pm. Tickets cost £10 for adults and £7.50 for under 12s. To book, tel: +44 (0)1579 350044 or visit www.wegottickets.com. Guided garden tours around the Pentillie estate with a member of the Coryton family are being held on Thursday 10 September. The tour includes tea and cake in the castle and costs £16.50 per person. www.pentillie.co.uk



National appeal

Some 36 temples, eight lakes and 12 avenues are among the glories of Stowe in Buckinghamshire (*above*), which is undergoing an extensive restoration scheme. The National Trust has launched a £600,000 appeal for the latest phase of the work, and an anonymous donor has offered to match gifts from the public. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

An eclectic collection



Make the most of the last chance to see the Garden Museum's unique collection of horticultural objects and artwork before it is taken to be cleaned and conserved ahead of a £6.6 million redevelopment project. See everything from ceramic watering cans and decades-old gnomes to a scrapbook of pressed flowers collected from London bombsites and various gardening garments. There will also be a first glimpse of plans for five new galleries that are being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Garden Museum in London will close on 31 October and will re-open in early 2017. Tel: +44 (0)1558 667149. www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

Greening of Greenwich



Thomas Hoblyn has joined forces with Alys Fowler and Tom Dixon's Design Research Studio to bring a green oasis to London's Greenwich Peninsula. Set against a striking architectural backdrop, the Peninsula Garden (left) features sculpted green mounds, wildflower banks and London's newest orchard, alongside a modern amphitheatre inspired by the Giant's Causeway. →

IMAGES: PENTILLIE - LLOYD RUSSELL. STOWE - NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/ANDREW BUTLER. GNOME - GARDEN MUSEUM. THE PENINSULA GARDEN GREENWICH - TOM HOBLYN

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The future of The Laskett Gardens has been safeguarded following a decision to bequeath it to the horticultural charity Perennial. The four-acre formal gardens in Herefordshire (*right*) were created by the former director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sir Roy Strong, and his late wife, the TV, theatre and film designer Dr Julia Trevelyan Oman. It will continue to be opened to the public and it is Sir Roy's wish that it is used for training. An endowment will fund its maintenance. 'We are looking forward to working with Sir Roy over the coming years in order to preserve his garden in the spirit of its creation,' says Perennial's chief executive Richard Capewell.



Exclusive reader offer

Sculptor Rupert Till has an extra special offer for readers of The English Garden. The Cheltenham-based artist is making a new version of his cockerel on a fork (left), this time in steel wire, which is galvanised and given a beautiful aged patina. For the next three months, readers can order this striking sculpture for £1,500, including delivery and installation - by the artist himself - anywhere in the UK. Rupert, a regular at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, will celebrate his 25th year as a sculptor next year. 'I'm looking forward to getting out of my studio and meeting my customers,' he says. For more details, tel: +44 (0)7921 771284 or visit www.ruperttill.co.uk

WHAT'S ON: SEPTEMBER



DUNDEE FLOWER AND FOOD FESTIVAL AT CAMPERDOWN COUNTRY PARK

Friday 4-Sunday 6 September, Scotland

Offering the best in horticulture (*above*) with fantastic displays, food and live entertainment. Visit www.dundeeflowerandfoodfestival.com

THE ARTISTS' GARDEN: ART EXHIBITION AT RHS GARDEN ROSEMOOR

Friday 4-Sunday 20 September, Devon

More than 85 talented artists from the South West are involved in this exciting exhibition of naturalistic pictures, prints and cards created using a variety of media. All work is for sale. Normal garden admission applies. 11am-5pm. For more details, tel: +44 (0)1805 626800 or visit www.rhs.org.uk

HOLKER HALL CHILLI FESTIVAL

Saturday 12-Sunday 13 September, Cumbria

A two-day festival featuring specialist chilli companies from all over the country, local specialist food suppliers, food demonstrations, entertainment and quirky gifts. For more details, tel: +44 (0)1539 558328 or visit www.holker.co.uk

PLANT FAIR AT WESTON PARK

Sunday 13 September, Shropshire

A great family day out with specialist nurseries, a miniature railway and an adventure playground. Entry to the fair and gardens, £2.50. 10am-4pm. Tel: +44 (0)1952 852100 or visit www.weston-park.com



CITY HARVEST FESTIVAL AT CAPEL MANOR GARDENS

Saturday 19 September, Middlesex

See dazzling displays of produce and enjoy delicious food, country crafts, bees and falconry, finishing with a tug-of-war. Adults: £6.50. Concessions: £5.50. Children aged two-16: £3.50. Children aged one or under: free. 10am-4pm. For more details, tel: 0845 6122122 or visit www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk

MALVERN AUTUMN SHOW AT THE SHOWGROUND, MALVERN

Saturday 26-Sunday 27 September, Worcestershire

Be inspired by autumn and enjoy a celebration of food (*left*), the countryside, gardening and nostalgia. For tickets, tel: +44 (0)1684 584924 or visit www.threecounties.co.uk

IMAGES/THE LASKETT - CLIVE BOURSNELL
CARROTS - MALVERN AUTUMN SHOW

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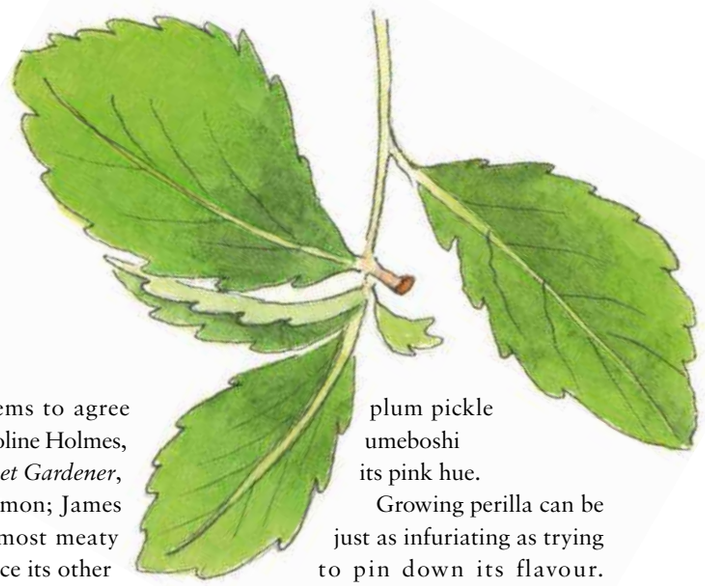
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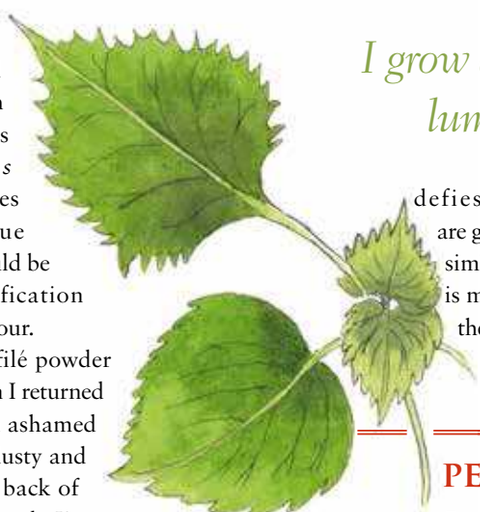
SPICE SO NICE

Jane Perrone reveals some lesser-known plants to grow and cook for that frisson of flavour

ILLUSTRATIONS HELEN CAMPBELL



When I lived in Louisiana in the southern US for a spell in my twenties, my tame British tastebuds did not know what had hit them. From filé gumbo dotted with glutinous okra to blackened fish speckled with cayenne and paprika, there was a new array of flavours to savour. But to describe the filé powder (made from the ground leaves of the North American sassafras tree, *Sassafras albidum*) that gives gumbo its unique tang as 'spicy' would be a vast oversimplification of its complex flavour.



I bought some filé powder back with me when I returned to Britain, but I'm ashamed to say it still sits, dusty and untouched, at the back of a kitchen cupboard; I've never dared to try to replicate an authentic Creole gumbo. That's not to say that I've switched back to a bland diet - I grow a range of edible leaves that, given their relative rarity in British cuisine and our inability to pigeonhole them otherwise, usually get lumped together as 'spicy'.

Take perilla (*Perilla frutescens*, aka shiso). This nettle-like leaf (*above*) is ubiquitous in Japan - you could even buy shiso-flavoured Pepsi for a while - but to Western palates, it can only be described by comparison with another herb. Yet no one seems to agree which flavour it's closest to. Caroline Holmes, author of *Herbs for the Gourmet Gardener*, says it is reminiscent of cinnamon; James Wong says it adds 'a rich, almost meaty savoury flavour' to dishes (hence its other common name, the beefsteak plant). As the doyenne of Eastern vegetables, Joy Larkcom, concludes: 'The unique flavour of perilla defies description'. There are green and red-leaved types, similar in flavour. The green is more potent; the red lends the vinegar in Japanese sour plum pickle umeboshi its pink hue.

I grow a range of edible leaves that usually get lumped together in the 'spicy' category

Growing perilla can be just as infuriating as trying to pin down its flavour. Germination can be painfully slow and erratic: I have failed completely several times, then chucked the contents of the seed tray onto a patch in the garden, only to see the discarded seed sprout quite happily. But once you have it, and provided you are lax about removing the seedheads, it will self-seed about in all the most inconvenient places. →

PERILLA GROWING TIPS

Expert advice from Kate McEvoy of The Real Seed Catalogue in Pembrokeshire:

Varieties: 'There are the red and green-leaved varieties, plus Korean perilla, which is slightly different in flavour - a bit more liquorice-like. But the main reason to grow the different colours is they look pretty! The seed needs light to germinate, and don't let the compost dry out. I always think of perilla as like basil - once you get it going, it's really happy, but it can be a bit fussy early in the season. But unlike basil, once it has got going, it's much happier outside.'

Soil: 'A bit of muck under perilla and plenty of water will make the leaves much more lush. Don't treat it mean - sunshine and rich soil will bring out the flavour. Slugs will eat it when it's little, but it's not particularly slug-prone.'

Position: 'It does well in pots if you don't let it dry out too much, but I tend to put it in a herb border. It will self-seed, which is nice if you don't mind that approach.'

Harvesting: 'I use the young leaves shredded in salad, and it's nice in Pimm's.'

If you don't have the patience to get perilla started, save your frustration and instead try sprouting fenugreek, *Trigonella foenum-graecum* (*top of previous page*). You don't even need to make a trip to the garden centre - raid your spice rack and you'll find seeds sold for culinary purposes, which look like tiny chips of toffee. They will germinate profusely, provided they haven't been hanging around your kitchen for years like my filé powder.

With seed this dirt cheap, you can easily afford to sow fenugreek - or 'methi', as it's known in India - lavishly as a microgreen, which is how I prefer it. Allow it to grow much bigger than 4cm, and it gets too tough and bitter. Sprinkle the seed thickly over seed compost in a seed tray or stretch of guttering, firming it down, but don't cover it with compost. Instead, cover with a wad of newspaper or a board to exclude all light. Keep the soil moist with a mister spray, and check the seed daily: as soon as it germinates, whip off the cover and let the seed grow on into the light. This way, the seedlings come up clean rather than crusted in compost they've pushed through. I love the shoots sprinkled over dahl and rice or a spicy soup, or just mixed into a regular green salad. The same supermarket-seed microgreen technique also works brilliantly with coriander and cumin seed. You can grow fenugreek outside as a green manure in spring, as it's a nitrogen-fixing plant: snip some to eat, and allow the rest to flower before digging into the soil in autumn. It is ideal for raised beds, as it's more drought-tolerant than most.

If your garden is purely ornamental, and you have no need of green manures, and not enough space for germinating pesky perilla seeds, turn instead to another of my favourite spicy leaves, myrtle (*Myrtus communis*). This makes a pretty evergreen shrub in a sheltered spot, with starry white flowers in June and July (*below left*). If winter temperatures frequently dip below freezing in your garden, grow in a pot and bring into the shelter of a greenhouse for winter. Like bay, these leathery leaves are added to food to infuse their flavour, but removed before cooking, or used to stuff or wrap meat as it roasts. Even easier: add some branches of myrtle to the fire when barbecueing or cooking on a campfire, as they do in Italy and Sardinia, to lend meat a smoky hit of spice.

Add branches of myrtle to the fire when barbecueing to lend meat a smoky hit of spice



And for those with no outdoor space at all, the curry leaf plant (*above right*) makes a decent house plant, and an excellent substitute in recipes that call for curry powder. *Murraya koenigii* just needs a sunny windowsill and a large pot to thrive. Just don't get it mixed up with the other curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*), which is all mouth and no trousers when it comes to taste - the silvery leaves may smell like curry, but the flavour doesn't transfer well to food.

RECIPE: MIXED VEGETABLE TEMPURA

James Wong has a knack for popularising tasty but unusual edible plants among British gardeners. This recipe comes from his book *Homegrown Revolution*.

Ingredients - serves 4

For the dipping sauce
- 2 tbsp Japanese soy sauce
- 15ml mirin rice wine
- Small pinch of ground chilli
- Finely grated zest of half an orange
- 1cm piece fresh ginger, finely grated
- Half a teaspoon of Sichuan peppercorns

For the tempura
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Enough vegetable oil to half-fill a saucepan or wok, for deep frying
- 125ml sesame oil, for deep frying
- 1 egg
- 300ml ice-cold soda water
- 75g plain white flour
- 75g cornflour
- ½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- A selection of vegetables, sliced
- 10 *Perilla frutescens* leaves

Method

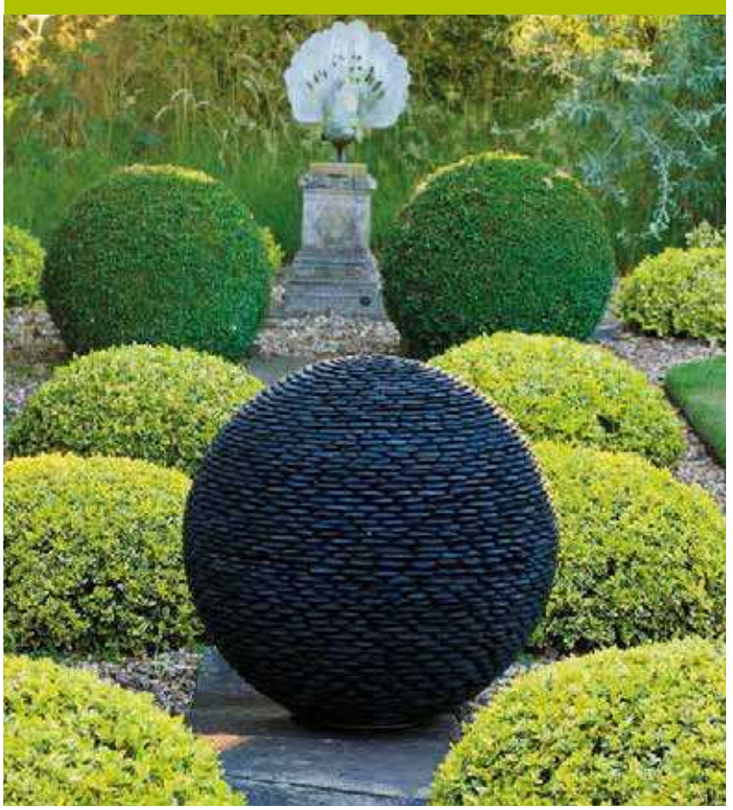
- **Make the dipping sauce** in a small saucepan by heating all the ingredients over a low heat, and gently simmering for 5 minutes. Set aside to cool.
- **In a small bowl**, mix the ground cinnamon and sea salt to make cinnamon salt. Set aside.
- **Half-fill a large saucepan** or wok with the vegetable oil and sesame oil, and heat to 180˚C or until the oil begins to smoke.
- **Once the oil is ready**, prepare the batter (this needs to be done just before frying to ensure you end up with crispy rather than soggy tempura). Whisk the egg and soda water in a bowl - the cold water ensures the batter does not absorb too much oil. The bubbles in the soda give it lightness.
- **Add the flours** and the bicarb of soda, and mix quickly to create a lumpy batter - the mix should look like air bubbles with small pockets of flour.
- **Dip veg** into the batter one by one (saving the perilla leaves for last) and fry, a few pieces at a time.
- **Fry for 1-2 minutes** or until crisp and golden. Serve with cinnamon salt and the dipping sauce.

James Wong's *Homegrown Revolution* is published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (£20, hardback). www.orionbooks.co.uk



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At the heart of Ellicar garden is a natural swimming pond with luxurious beds of grasses and perennials.

BRITAIN'S BEST
GARDENER'S GARDEN



Winning combination

This year's winner of the Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden competition has combined her two passions - family and gardening →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | **WORDS** TAMSIN WESTHORPE

Those who share a garden with children will have experienced the heartache of their borders being used as a backstop for cricket and football games. But sharing the space with children doesn't have to mean a bare lawn and relying on a few tough but battered shrubs for colour.

Garden designer and mother of five Sarah Murch has created a garden that is a paradise for plantsmen and a magical world for her children and much-loved pets. To confirm that she has hit the balance just right, she has just been awarded first place in the Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden competition.

Ellicar Gardens in Doncaster is a real find, as it tackles the issue of wanting to both garden and provide a place of freedom for children. 'I am thrilled to have won the Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden Competition - it's an honour,' says Sarah.

On my arrival at the 11-acre plot, three of which are gardened, Sarah was busy selling plants to garden visitors. She showed me through to the kitchen to have a drink while she finished her work. It was too tempting - I sneaked through the patio doors and out to the garden. The site is flat, and although the garden is only five years old, it offers height, texture and plenty of intrigue. Many years ago, it was fen land, which has since been reclaimed. This has resulted in a rich soil with a pH of 7.5. The premium soil explains why so many of the plants are taller than expected - this, and the home-made compost Sarah and her husband Will add every year.

At the very far end of the garden is a wood planted to celebrate her daughter Hannah's 21st birthday. In front of that is a pony paddock, and then the jewel in the crown - a natural swimming pond. This pool is used daily by the family from April to October, and Sarah starts her day with a swim. 'It is warmer than an unheated conventional pool,' she says.

BELOW A view of the new perennial and grass bed and the reed bed at the edge of the pool that acts as a filter. The dominant grass is a favourite of Sarah's - *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'.

'As a family, we love wild swimming, so we went to Austria to learn about the Biotop System. We now work with expert Andy Watkinson as part of Natural Pools UK. Our pool has become a showpiece for the business, and a great source of entertainment for the family.' No chemicals are used, and the water is cleaned by a reed bed system. This type of swimming brings children closer to nature, watching dragonflies dart across the pool.

Being an open, windy site, the many grasses in the beds offer movement, height and colour for much of the year. It is their vigour that has given the garden such impact at such a young age. 'I plant blocks of plants that knit together,' Sarah explains. Coupled with perennials, each bed offers stunning plant combinations, but more importantly they create homes for wildlife. 'When we first moved here, it was a rough field with tussocks of grass and little in the way of wildlife, →

'I am thrilled to have won the Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden Competition - it's an honour'











CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Sarah and her daughter Isabel walk their golden Guernsey goats Heather, Violet, Daphne and Angelica; hours of fun are had in the natural swimming pond - youngest son George takes a leap; even Isabel's pony Shelannie is often found in the garden; Bumble the goose rules the roost and according to Sarah behaves like a dog (on open days he retires to his run); Sarah has three dogs that enjoy darting around the garden. Isabel's Italian greyhound Luka offers a touch of regal charm.





→ and now it is alive with birds and insects, thanks to the varied planting,' she explains. 'You couldn't even ride a pony across it, as it was so rough.

'We don't cut back the perennials here until spring, as the drama of the seedheads offers months more interest to the garden, and allows the birds to feed on the seed.'

Plants are rarely - if ever - supported, and are chosen for their ability to stand up to and through the winter, and cope with her three dogs dashing through them - this is no place for the faint-hearted plant! Success stories have included *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', euphorbias, echinops, hemerocallis and monardas. A favourite plant is the grass *Deschampsia* Golden Dew.

It is in winter that Sarah enjoys the garden best. Watching goldfinches flock in to feast on the verbena and echinacea seeds is a highlight, as is watching birds search for invertebrates in the gravel garden. In June and July, the garden has another peak, with the rose garden offering scent and colour from her flock of Peter Beales roses.

LEFT The pool is home to *Nymphaea alba* 'Virginalis' and *Nymphaea* 'Charles de Meurville'. **TOP RIGHT** A deck by the pool hosts family gatherings. **BELOW** *Verbena bonariensis, Stipa gigantea,* perovskia and *Gaura lindheimeri* enjoy life in the gravel garden.



'The garden is a hobby for me - along with the gardening, I enjoy watching the birds,' explains Sarah. Being on a migratory trail, it's a constant source of entertainment. Voles, owls, kingfishers and grass snakes are regular visitors, along with bees and butterflies.

'We don't cut back the perennials here until spring, as the drama of the seedheads offers months more interest'

Eager to involve her children in the garden, she has created hibernation homes for insects, and created areas of shade and many places to play. The garden is also home to a garden school where Sarah welcomes local school groups to share the space. Painted pebbles and other examples of garden art by children are evident in her school garden. On 14 October, Sarah is welcoming photographer Clive Nichols who will be running a flower and garden masterclass.

As a garden designer, Sarah has a few tricks up her sleeve when it →





LEFT The school garden offers plenty of places for beneficial insects to overwinter, such as this bee box. **BELOW** Hidden behind a screen of *Aster* 'Little Carlow' and *Nassella tenuissima* (also known as *Stipa tenuissima*) is the sunken trampoline.

→ comes to design. She trained through KLC School of Design in London as a correspondence student. One of her tricks is making the trampoline invisible by positioning it at ground level above a pit, then surrounding it with borders. To add to the appeal of this garden for kids, there is an area of lawn large enough for play, plus tree houses and swings.

As we walk the garden together, Sarah shares her future plans for a molinia walk and wildflower meadows. It is incredible to think that this garden is all done around work and a family and the care of goats, horses, poultry and dogs, while Sarah's husband Will runs a specialist rhododendron, camellia and azalea nursery called Osberton Nurseries. The soil in the garden is alkaline, so they are experimenting with planting techniques for rhododendrons. It is clear that they are both completely ensconced in horticulture and very willing to share advice.

Looking through photographs of the garden's creation at her kitchen table, it is obvious that it is at the heart of family life. The images include ones of much-loved pets enjoying the garden, the whole family pitching in to dig the pool, and the children weaving willow structures and planting. Sarah is not convinced that her children will become gardeners, but they all love spending time here - it has helped shape who they are.

The argument that a garden can't be created until the kids leave home is now a weak one for me. Having met a busy lady who has created the perfect family garden, I have seen first-hand that it can be done.

Ellicar Gardens, Gringley on the Hill, Doncaster DN10 4SN. Open April-July and September-October, Fridays, 1-5pm. www.ellicargrdens.co.uk

'The garden is a hobby for me - along with the gardening, I enjoy watching the birds'



Ellicar Gardens notebook

Sarah's top garden tips

- **Every winter, we add home-made compost** to the beds. It is a mix of green waste and pig, cow, horse and goat manure. It is turned every two weeks for a year before applying.
- **Choose plants that don't need supporting**. Planting grasses and perennials in blocks means that they can support each other to some extent.
- **Avoid cutting back borders until spring** if at all possible, as the birds will feed on the seedheads. The russet-brown grasses look fantastic when decorated with frost.
- **Buy plants from specialist nurseries**. You will receive fantastic advice from growers.
- **Create a gravel garden**, as surprisingly it offers more wildlife activity than any other part of the garden.



- **Sharing the garden with pets** adds so much character to the space. Poultry will eat your slugs and seedlings! The dogs may dig a few holes in the lawn, but that is all part of family life and gardening.
- **Pack your borders with plants**, and in high summer the weeds will go unnoticed.



A LEARNING GARDEN

Sarah recommends making hibernation places for insects and creating garden art with children. She is convinced that the garden makes the perfect classroom.

WINNING GARDENS

The judges were thrilled with the quality of gardens that entered this year's competition. The aim of this high-profile competition is to reward and celebrate amateur gardeners who achieve gold medal standard gardens.

The silver medal was awarded to Pear Tree Cottage in Worcestershire (www.peartree cottage.me) which opens for the NGS. Owner Pam Thompson has put her prize towards a Premium Cobra MX51SPH mower, and says: 'It cuts like a dream.'

The bronze medal went to Moors Meadow in Herefordshire (www.moorsmeadow.co.uk) Owner Ros Bissell opens her garden by appointment and for the NGS.

Garden challenges

MANAGEABLE WILDFLOWERS: With such a good soil, Sarah struggles to contain some plants that are part of wildflower mixes. These plantings can be far higher maintenance than the ornamental plantings.



NATURAL SWIMMING

Sarah and her family use their crystal-clear natural swimming pond every day from April until October. 'It's like a huge aquarium,' says Sarah. Half of the pool is for swimming, and the other half is a regeneration area for plants and a reed bed filter system. Plants are cut back in autumn - sometimes from the pool in a swimsuit! www.naturalpools.uk.com

BRITAIN'S BEST GARDENER'S GARDEN COBRA

Sarah Murch's prize for winning this year's competition was £1,000 worth of vouchers to spend on Cobra's range of top powered garden products. The runners up were given £300 worth of vouchers. The Cobra range launched in 2014 and has since grown from strength to strength, now consisting of more than 100 products designed for the UK gardener without compromising on price. The three Cobra Britain's Best Gardener's Garden winners had their pick of products - all designed to cater for the changing conditions of a British garden. See what the winners picked at www.theenglishgarden.co.uk

For details of the Cobra range, visit www.cobragarden.co.uk



It's only NATURAL

Bay Tree House garden has transformed from a sloping lawn into a modern plot, with naturalistic-style planting that peaks in late summer →

PHOTOGRAPHS JO WHITWORTH | **WORDS** TAMSIN HOPE THOMSON



The garden at Bay Tree House covers one acre and features Piet Oudolf-inspired planting with grasses and late-flowering perennials.

ABOVE Plantings of agapanthus, echinacea and Russian sage (perovskia) keep the show going into autumn. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'; *Scabiosa ochroleuca*; *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group; *Echinacea purpurea* 'White Swan'.

For the first six months of planning her garden, Julia Whiteaway knew what she didn't want. But it wasn't until she saw a picture of Piet Oudolf's naturalistic planting in the book *Designing with Plants* that she thought: 'Wow, that's what I'd like to do'. This inspirational style was the spark Julia needed to begin transforming her stretch of lawn into a contemporary one-acre garden.

Standing at the front of the house in late summer, there is a view down the length of a rill edged by grasses and the floating heads of echinacea, towards ribbons of meadow planting at the bottom of the garden. The contrast between the clean lines of the clipped yew hedges and the wild look of the planting is beautiful.

Julia and her husband Charles moved to Bay Tree House in Hampshire 13 years ago with their two children. 'At that stage, I had no horticultural training whatsoever, but I wanted to learn,' Julia says. She'd been a teacher for 20 years, but while she was planning her garden, she saw an advert for a garden design diploma. When her garden was more developed, a friend came to visit and asked Julia to do her garden; then another friend asked the same; and so Julia started a new career as a garden designer. 'I enjoy








trying to understand what people want - it's good to have the challenge of working with different tastes,' she says. 'Every garden you do is different.'

When she started her own garden, there were a few big trees, a sloping lawn and a pergola up by the house. It was this that gave Julia the idea to put in a rill, because the view through the pergola takes your eye down the garden, and she wanted something striking to look at. Also on her wish list were apple trees, beneath which she planted a traditional meadow; and a pleached lime square, where Julia and Charles often eat lunch in the shade of the trees. To break up the stretch of lawn, she created another, more modern take on a meadow - slim, curved beds arranged in a broken circle and densely planted with five different types of ornamental grasses, including *Deschampsia* 'Goldtau' and *Stipa gigantea*, among perennials such as perovskia and verbena. 'I wanted the planting to look tight, next to the back border, which is quite free,' Julia says. →

This style was the spark Julia needed to begin transforming her stretch of lawn

ABOVE The rill is surrounded by gaura, calamagrostis and echinaceas 'Green Envy', 'Green Jewel' and 'Fatal Attraction'. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** Grass *Deschampsia* 'Goldtau'; *Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch'; *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'; *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire'.















→ To get a big impact from plants, she often advises clients to limit the number of different types they use. 'I don't like busy-ness,' she says, 'I like strong swathes and a restricted plant palette. It takes courage to order 25 of something.' But as you can see in her garden, it works. In late summer, the repeated use of echinaceas through the garden, in pink, white and green, adds a rhythm to the planting - she has used the same plant, but kept it interesting with different cultivars. She also likes to use height contrasts, placing plants such as *Verbena bonariensis* next to its more compact relation *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop', a simple technique that makes an eye-catching combination.

To ensure that her borders are full of colour from summer into autumn, Julia chooses her plants with care. 'Late-summer planting needs planning,' she says. 'I don't do the 'Chelsea chop' on anything; I choose flowers to peak at a certain time.' She uses plant shapes to create contrast - purple spires of perovskia next to cone-shaped echinaceas, all set off by swaying drifts of miscanthus and pennisetum. The colours are soft and complementary, moving from soft blues through to purples and pinks, highlighted by splashes of white. And then as the colours fade





with the summer, many plants such as *Phlomis russeliana*, eryngiums, veronicastrum and echinacea provide seedheads into autumn, while the grasses stand through winter.

When it comes to making the best of your space, Julia's advice is to remain open to ideas from all kinds of artistic influences, because you never know what will inspire you to create something new. 'I saw an old tapestry with unusual colour combinations including orange, pale pink, blue, purple, silver and green,' she says. 'You wouldn't have thought those colours would work, but that's now a planting palette in one of my borders.'

In a garden that she created to the back of the house, where she has only Mediterranean plants, it was her kitchen, which overlooks the garden, that influenced the colour scheme. 'It wasn't a conscious decision,' she says, laughing. 'I just realised one day that I'd used the same colours'. Lavender and agapanthus planted beneath the cool green of olive trees make a striking view from the kitchen window.

To get a garden looking at its peak in late summer takes skill. The wild look of the planting in places like the 6m-deep back border is deceptive - it looks natural because of the planning that has gone into it. Each year, Julia tweaks the planting to keep it looking at its best. 'I have an end-of-summer review - to see if there's too much of one colour, or whether any plants have self-seeded too much.'

To get a garden looking at its peak in late summer takes skill

Aside from editing the planting to keep it under control, Julia has no major changes planned, so does she now get time to enjoy the garden? 'There's always something that needs doing,' she says. 'I endeavour to sit in the garden and do nothing but, as a designer, I'm always wondering what I could do better.'

Bay Tree House, Hampshire SO21 2QD. Open for the NGS as part of the Crawley Gardens group. Contact Julia on tel: +44 (0)1962 776974. www.hortusvarius.com

Julia's tips for late-summer planting →

ABOVE LEFT The Mediterranean garden by the kitchen. **BELOW LEFT** The meadow, which contains fruiting apple trees, is let go to seed in late summer. **ABOVE CENTRE** The curving beds are planted with a mix of grasses and late-flowering perennials. **ABOVE RIGHT** The courtyard by the house features lavender, hydrangea, stipa and ferns.

Bay Tree House garden notebook



THYME TO SIT

The centre of this old cider press stone has been filled with gravel and planted with woolly thyme. It makes an attractive focal point in the middle of the contemporary meadow.

INSPIRED PLANTING

Make an impact with the blue spires of perovskia and pink echinacea. With a contrast of flower shapes and complementary colours, they make a striking plant combination.





ELEGANT SEATING

This modern bench is a piece of slate from a hearth, which has been mounted on the wall using brackets. It's simple and practical, and has the advantage that you can mow underneath it.

Garden challenges

HOT & DRY: The main challenge when developing the garden was the very poor soil and hot, dry aspect. The plants were chosen to cope with this.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Bay Tree House, Julia also recommends:

- **NURSERY Hardy's Plants** An excellent nursery specialising in perennials. Freefolk Priors, near Whitchurch RG28 7NJ. Tel: +44 (0)1256 896533. www.hardys-plants.co.uk
- **PLACE TO EAT Thyme & Tides Deli** A bistro and fishmonger. The High Street, Stockbridge SO20 6HE. Tel: +44 (0)1264 810101. www.thymeandtidesdeli.co.uk
- **PLACE TO STAY The Greyhound on the Test** Pub/restaurant with rooms. Stockbridge SO20 6EY. Tel: +44 (0)1264 810833. www.thegreyhoundonthetest.co.uk

Julia's tips for late-summer planting

- **Don't get carried away at the garden centre** after the long drab winter months, and buy lots of early flowering plants. Planting for late summer needs to be planned.
- **Choose your plants carefully** - there are plants which will flower in early summer, and then if cut back will produce a second flush of flowers later. Other plants such as *Geranium* Rozanne and *Gaura lindheimeri* will flower continuously from mid-June through to the frosts.
- **When planting echinaceas** and panicum, they need their own space - if they're crowded out by earlier-flowering plants, they will simply give up the will to live.
- **Easy reliable plants** that don't mind pushy neighbours include *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire' and *Anenome* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'.
- **Include plants that have interesting seedheads**, which will stand and look good throughout the winter.



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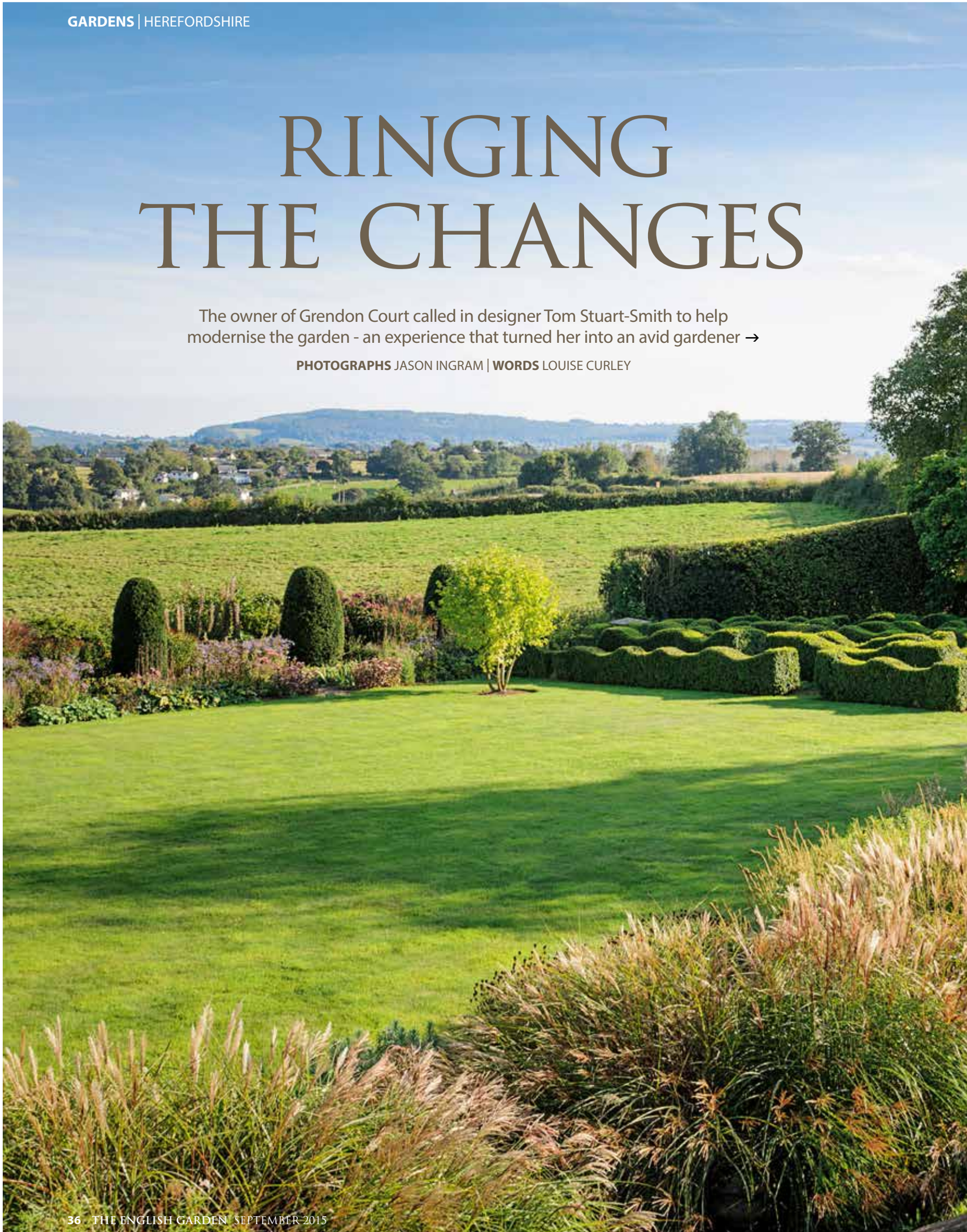
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RINGING THE CHANGES

The owner of Grendon Court called in designer Tom Stuart-Smith to help modernise the garden - an experience that turned her into an avid gardener →

PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM | **WORDS** LOUISE CURLEY





Grendon Court garden covers two acres and has a late-summer, contemporary planting palette.



Grendon Court and its contemporary garden nestle in the idyllic countryside of Herefordshire, but until relatively recently the relationship between house, garden and beyond was not a harmonious one. Nine years ago, New Zealander Kate Edwards and her English husband Mark bought the house from his mother, for whom it had become too big. At the time, the house sat awkwardly in the landscape. To the rear, a large bank sloped down towards the house; to the front of the building, access outdoors was down a flight of steps, past a lower storey, to an area used for parking cars. 'It felt like the bank was pushing the whole house down the valley,' says Kate.

The only solution Kate could see was to level out the site. 'Everyone said I'd never be able to do it, it's not practical, I'd never be able to fill up a whole storey - but I was determined to do it,' she says.

ABOVE The garden was redesigned by Kate and designer Tom Stuart-Smith nine years ago. **ABOVE RIGHT** The path to the pool is lined with persicaria and *Baptisia australis*. **BELOW RIGHT** The pool area has an incredible boundary of 2,000 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus'.

The site wasn't the only issue. Kate and Mark were living in Hong Kong at the time. She was also aware that it had been a much-loved family space, and that any redesign needed to be handled sensitively. To include her in the decision-making, Kate consulted her mother-in-law to see if she knew anyone who could help with the design. As it happened, the son of her mother-in-law's great friend was the renowned landscape designer Tom Stuart-Smith. Recalling their first meeting, Kate says: 'He agreed with all the things I knew needed changing about the garden. He never once said, 'You can't possibly do that'.'

'Tom Stuart-Smith agreed with all the things I knew needed changing about the garden'

Having grown up in New Zealand, Kate was used to big open spaces, and she wanted more than anything for the house to feel connected with the garden. The biggest priority was being able to walk straight out of the downstairs rooms into the garden. 'I didn't say anything to him about plants, other than I wanted peonies and no yellow,' she says. 'I got tons of yellow! If someone asked me what I've learnt about being a gardener, I would say, every garden needs some yellow.'

Kate likens those first years with the garden to adopting a baby. 'We did it all from Hong Kong; it was all done online. Then suddenly we moved here and it grew. I didn't know what I expected it to be doing, but I can



remember thinking, 'Crikey! I don't know anything about the plants'. So I took myself off to The English Gardening School and spent two years there,' she explains.

The two-acre garden now wraps around the house on three sides, and forms two distinctive levels. Rubble and soil from the north side of the house were removed to create a level entrance to the back of the house. This spoil was then used to form a terrace on the south side of the building, allowing Kate and her family to easily view and access the garden from the house. It also means the stunning view down the valley can now be fully appreciated.

To the west of the house is a lawn with deep borders on either side, packed with herbaceous perennials and grasses including *Eupatorium maculatum*, *Sedum* 'Matrona', *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea', *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus' and →



RIGHT Crisp hedges counterbalance the dancing grasses. **BELOW** The seedheads of veronicastrum mingle with colourful Japanese anemones and asters.



The main flower garden is less managed than other areas of the garden, and self-seeders have been allowed to linger



→ *Calamagrostis brachytricha*. At the far end is the vermicular, which means 'worm-like'. Box hedging has been clipped into waves - a modern, more relaxed take on a formal parterre or knot garden. In the background is a collection of metal sculptures of a New Zealand bird - the pukeko - a reminder of Kate's home country.

A flight of old stone steps lead up to the upper terrace. The main flower garden is less managed than other areas of the garden, and self-seeders have been allowed to linger. 'Up there, I've let things dance around,' says Kate, who - modestly - doesn't see herself as a gardener, but more of a custodian. She's becoming braver with her own plant choices, and loves the combination of *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis' planted alongside *Paeonia* 'Coral Charm', *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yakushima Dwarf' and *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Königin Charlotte'.

From here, a path wends its way towards the real highlight of the garden - some 2,000 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus' plants which surround a swimming pool, creating a dramatic, textural, natural screen. 'One of the things I did say to Tom was that I wanted to look out of our bedroom window to the pool and be reminded of Asian paddy fields.'

Opening the garden to visitors brings its own pressures, but it's good for focusing the mind, and Kate loves being able to share what she has with others. So much so that a fabulous barn next to the house has recently been converted into a space for weddings and fine dining. 'Every time I have a group of people around the garden, I learn something, and it's a lovely way to entertain.'

Grendon Court, Upton Bishop, Herefordshire HR9 7QP. Open for the NGS in June. Groups welcome by appt, June-Sept. Call +44 (0)7971 339126 or email kate@grendoncourt.co.uk

Kate's top garden tips →






CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Japanese anemone 'Queen Charlotte', a semi-double with masses of large, pink, cup-shaped flowers on tall, wiry stems; *Sedum* 'Matrona', which has dense clusters of pale-pink flowers in summer and early autumn; *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', with strong vertical stems that bleach to a beautiful straw colour late in the season; *Dahlia* 'Helen Huston', whose flowers grow to 15-20cm in diameter; *Eupatorium purpureum*, an invaluable plant for the late-summer border; *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Graziella', whose foliage develops copper and orange tones in autumn, becoming tan for winter; *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune', with loose spires of lilac-blue flowers from July to October and peppermint-scented leaves; *Calamagrostis brachytricha*, or foxtail, with its stunning feathery plumes of greyish pink flowers.






Grendon Court notebook



EXTENDING THE SEASON

Kate is a huge fan of dahlias and the fabulous shots of colour they bring to the garden later in the season. Her personal preference is for long-stemmed varieties like 'Zorro' (*above*), whose dinnerplate blooms measure 23cm across, and she recommends Rose Cottage Plants for its selection. www.rosecottageplants.co.uk

Garden challenges

RABBITS: Rabbits are a particular problem for Kate. 'Be patient and work out what they don't want to eat,' she says. She has learnt which tulips aren't so appealing, and focuses on growing varieties like 'Ballerina', 'Menton', 'Queen of Night' and 'Mount Tacoma', which they leave alone.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Grendon Court, Kate also recommends:

- **GARDEN Brockhampton Cottage** Another garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith and owned by the co-founder of Crocus. This garden is only a few miles from Grendon Court. Open for the NGS in June. Brockhampton HR1 4TQ. www.ngs.org.uk
- **SHOP Baileys** An interiors shop with a difference. A temple to upcycling and all things vintage, and a great place for reconditioned gardening tools and quirky planters for the garden. Bridstow, Ross-on-Wye HR9 6JU. Tel: +44 (0)1989 561931. www.baileyshome.com
- **PLACE TO EAT The Green Man** Country pub, restaurant and hotel in a picturesque village. Fownhope, Herefordshire HR1 4PE. Tel: +44 (0)1432 860243. www.thegreenman.co

SUPER SEEDHEADS

The dying embers of plants such as *Veronicastrum* 'Spring Dew' and *Phlomis russeliana* (*below*) are celebrated for their structure and form. Catching the low autumn light, they provide a perfect contrast to the grasses in the garden, which are at their peak.





NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The vermicular was originally planted with masses of hakonechloa in between, but after four years of it looking fabulous, the hakonechloa has started to look unhappy. Kate sees this as a chance to try something different, so she will be replanting with *Alchemilla mollis*.

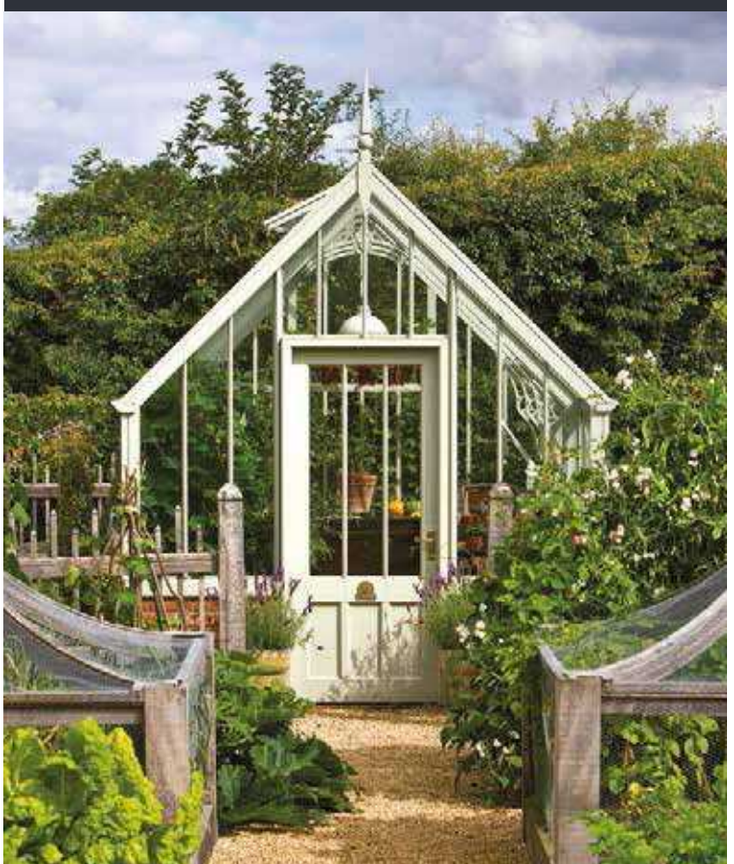
Kate's top gardening tips

- **If a plant dies**, never plant the same one again. Some people say three strikes and you're out, but I'm a bit more ruthless.
- **Keep on top of the hedges**, edges and lawns. Don't let them get untidy, as these provide the vital structure to a garden.
- **Embrace plants that do well** in your garden. Don't be too paranoid about plants that love you. Respect the self-seeder - they're free.
- **Scarify your lawn in October**. Lawn maintenance is so boring, but necessary. If you don't get around to doing it one year, you'll get payback the following year when it won't look so good.
- **If you're employing a designer**, trust their judgement. It was a real privilege to work with someone as knowledgeable as Tom Stuart-Smith.



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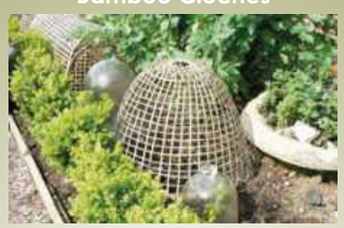


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Noel's garden is three-quarters of an acre and contains an annexe, where he writes his books.

TRIED & TESTED

Garden writer **Noel Kingsbury**'s own plot at Montpelier Cottage, a trial ground for his planting experiments, comes into its own at this time of year

PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS

This year has been the first that I have felt really happy with the garden. My wife Jo and I moved here 10 years ago, and of course immediately started making a garden.

Jo likes to grow annual flowers for cutting as well as pelargoniums and petunias around the house; she also does mosaics, which do a lot to add life and colour to the garden all year round. My main interest, apart from the joy of creating and making use of a garden, was to continue my →





'Our garden is a mix of the cheerfully traditional and the very naturalistic - sometimes wildly naturalistic'

→ research into planting combinations. I am interested in developing ornamental plant mixes that reduce maintenance and which might be used on a larger scale in public places. Our garden, then, is a mix of the cheerfully traditional and the very naturalistic - sometimes wildly naturalistic - taking up about three-quarters of an acre, along with three acres of wildflower meadow.

Since I have written several books with the Dutch designer Piet Oudolf, people often wonder if I have a 'Piet Oudolf garden' - I don't! I prefer to have something less precisely planned, with a lot of natural spreading and seeding. I am also more interested in colour, of which I try to have plenty as soon as the weather allows. I've been hugely influenced by the planting styles that have been developed for public plantings in Germany, which are naturalistic, long lived, wildlife friendly and based on thorough research. I have also found inspiration in the work of my colleagues at the University of Sheffield, who have been researching planting combinations since the 1990s.

ABOVE The dense planting by the house includes swathes of rudbeckia, hollyhocks, *Heliopsis helianthoides* and *Pycnanthemum pilosum*.

ABOVE RIGHT A beautiful haze of *Nassella tenuissima* (aka *Stipa tenuissima*), verbena and acanthus edges the decked path to the terrace.

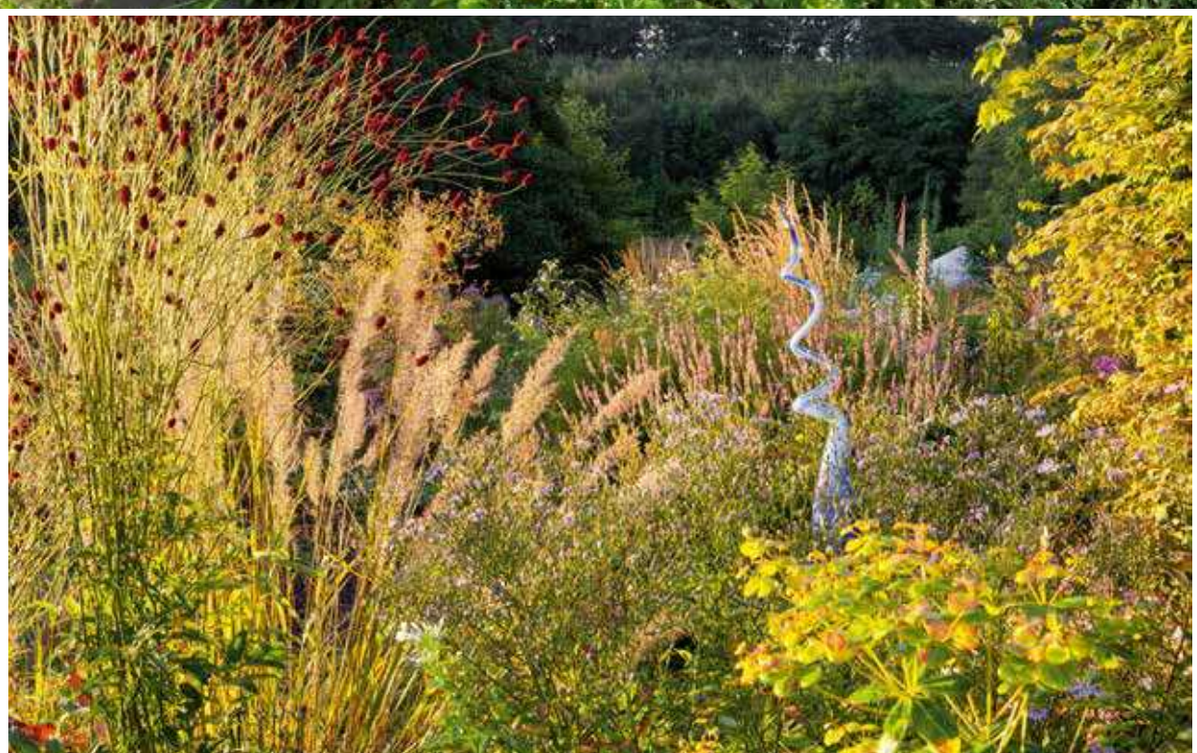
The soil here is a very fertile heavy loam and holds moisture, which many gardeners might think is a good thing - indeed it is for vegetables, fruit and roses. For growing perennials and grasses, it is more of a challenge, as the pressure of weed growth is considerable, and many perennials grow to enormously lush proportions, which can create problems in itself. I shall never forget having Jonas Reif, the editor of a leading German garden magazine, around for lunch one day - he was astonished at the size of our willow gentians (*Gentiana asclepiadea*); for us, these are a very good flower for August, with their enormous arching sprays of blue trumpets.

I am passionately interested in wildflower habitats and what we can learn from them as gardeners and managers of landscapes. American tallgrass prairie is a good model (fertile soil, moisture) and the source of some of our best border plants. We have masses of the most civilised goldenrod for gardens, *Solidago rugosa*, which attracts large numbers of butterflies; and a blue aster, *Aster puniceus*, whose seed I collected in a marsh in New York State, and which has self-sown here ever since. These mix well with perennials from other lush habitats, such as the tall herb flora found in mountain regions, where moving nutrient-rich water continually feeds plants from below. Again, many very good border plants are from this habitat, such as *Persicaria amplexicaulis*, →



LEFT The annexe in the garden has a verandah with seating to enjoy the view. The building houses a study and a guest bedroom. It has a green roof and was constructed using a timber frame structure with a straw-clay infill.





ABOVE The stone-paved terrace has views out over Noel's three acres of meadows, and the areas he uses to trial planting combinations. Tibetan prayer flags flutter like bunting above the dining set and pots of bright annuals.





'Prairie plants will continue to flower well into October... but it is seedheads which are increasingly important from now on'

→ which gives us two months of colour from August onwards. Big ornamental grasses like *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' are a superb complement for these perennials.

More challenging has been my attempts at creating a 'stylised meadow' planting. The idea is to use a small ornamental grass en masse, and dot perennials into it. *Briza media* works well, but soon looks untidy. The very popular *Stipa tenuissima* (aka *Nassella tenuissima*) is far better, with its long-lasting, wonderfully fluffy seedheads, but it self-seeds only reluctantly on our soil. I will now try the pink-flowered wild barley, *Hordeum jubatum*, and hope that it seeds well.

Having plants self-seeding is a crucial part of what makes this garden work. Self-seeding plants do a lot of the work for you, and put themselves in places that we would never have thought of, or where we would never have succeeded in getting them growing. Some can, of course, become problematic, but on heavier soils this is rare. The greatest success here has been a seed strain of *Aquilegia vulgaris*, which continues to sow and spread and maintain amazing genetic diversity, continually throwing up new colours and flower shapes - they are our dominant plant in May. Earlier in the year, we use a lot of Barnhaven primulas, which, once they finish flowering, go semi-dormant and don't mind being covered by larger perennials.

One self-seeder is crucial in late summer: *Origanum laevigatum*. The bees love it, and so it complements the English marigolds (*Calendula officinalis*) and *Echium vulgare*, which Jo grows for her bees. Although asters, goldenrods and other prairie plants will continue to flower well into October or even later, it is seedheads which are increasingly important from now on, those of grasses particularly.

BELOW LEFT A glass sculpture from Germany glimmers in the sunlight, setting off the planting of sanguisorbas, asters and grasses. Beyond is Noel's yurt. **ABOVE** This bistro set sits among the planting of *Verbena bonariensis* and *Stipa gigantea*.

The garden is a lot of work, but we keep on top of it with Diana Sessarego's help one day a week, so in total it's about two to three days' work a week. After 10 years, we are getting to the point of wanting to reshape areas - which is, I suppose, a sign that a garden has got to some level of maturity.

Montpelier Cottage, Brilley, Whitney-on-Wye, Hereford, Herefordshire HR3 6HF. Open for the National Gardens Scheme on Sunday 13 September, 2-5pm. Find out more about Noel's writing and his work with plant mixes at www.noelkingsbury.com

Jo & Noel's gardening tips →

Montpelier Cottage notebook



FLYING THE FLAG FOR COLOUR

By the yurt is one of the tall and narrow Bali flags with a tail at the top that we have dotted around the garden. They act as eyecatchers, and we especially appreciate them in winter, although we always like their constant motion. They come in different colours, which we swap around every now and again.



PRETTY AS A PICTURE

One of Jo's mosaics is a picture frame, which hangs on the verandah of our annexe building. It is a way of encouraging people to think about what they are looking at, either in the garden or in the countryside beyond.

Garden challenges

WEEDS: In this climate, in the countryside, the overwhelming task is to minimise the growth of aggressive colonising native species, notably pasture grasses and nettles. We use an array of methods: hoeing, hand-pulling, spot spraying (with Roundup). Getting on top of grass growth at the end of winter is particularly important.

HIP TO BE SQUARE

Jo trims these box bushes as cubes in our paving. The idea comes from the Mien Ruys Gardens in Holland. She was a great post-war Dutch modernist garden designer whose work is full of playful little touches like this.



Jo & Noel's gardening tips

- **We cut back many perennials** in November, especially if they look untidy. The rest, mostly grasses, are left until February, as they are the main part of the garden aesthetic in winter.
- **In some areas, it is much easier to cut down** perennials, try to chop the stems up as much as possible, and then leave them on the ground as mulch. It is not very tidy, but eliminates the need to remove and compost them. Spring growth soon hides the debris.
- **With prairie plants**, I like to do a late-winter burn, which gets rid of goosegrass seedlings and weed grass very effectively, but does dormant perennials no harm. It needs still, dry weather, and is good fun!
- **Our weed-control strategy** is to keep the ground covered for as long as possible. We plant much denser than is often seen, and as plants seed and spread we'd like to eliminate bare soil altogether.
- **In dense planting**, new introductions often get swamped, or grow slowly. We start them off in a trial bed, and assess for a year or two before planting out.



ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Noel's garden he recommends:

- GARDEN **Westonbury Mill Water Gardens** An inventive and playful garden built around a series of well-planted ponds and a bog garden, although it is the follies that are the special thing here: there is a water-spouting gargoyle, a water-powered cuckoo clock and a 'bottle grotto'. There is also a very good café for light lunches and teas. Pembridge, Herefordshire HR6 9HZ. Tel: +44 (0)1544 388650. www.westonburymillwatergardens.com
- GARDEN **Hergest Croft Garden** A notable arboretum and a peaceful Edwardian era garden with much plant interest. Good teas in the café and quality plant sales. Ridgebourne Road, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3EG. Tel: +44 (0)1544 230160. www.hergest.co.uk

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PRIVATE VIEW

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | **WORDS** DEBORAH CURTIS

A magnificent garden designed by Stephen Woodhams is the crowning glory of an ambitious basement extension in one of London's most exclusive boroughs



The elegantly paved and imaginatively planted terraces of this central London townhouse are in fact a beautiful 'roof' garden, which sits above 180m^2 of subterranean living space extending to the front and rear of the property.

Designer Stephen Woodhams worked closely with architects Weldon Walshe to transform what was once a plain and featureless courtyard. 'The previous garden was limited in its identity, to say the least, with nondescript paving and a screen of *Magnolia grandiflora* pyramids across the back,' says Stephen. Creating the basement extension and roof-terrace garden involved the extraction and removal of hundreds of tons of earth. 'The hole was huge. I've →

→ never seen such a big hole. We then put it all back together as a proper garden above the basement.'

The northeast-facing rear courtyard was designed as a series of three rooms, starting with the addition of an orangery-style conservatory, built by Marston & Langinger, which opens out onto a sunken, built-in dining area.

Steps lead up to a higher level, where the focal point is created by a magnificent raised planter, in which stands one of three flat-pruned London plane trees. These form an L-shape around the seating area to provide privacy and natural shade.

'We've used two different colours of travertine stone tiles for the rear garden,' says Stephen. 'The main areas were all done in cream travertine, and then there is a big, bold walkway in chocolate travertine that is like a stripe and runs from the sunken dining area, up the staircase to the raised planter, which is set like an island in the space.' Steps in the corner of the courtyard lead up to a communal garden at the back, and the black railings, which run along the boundary wall, have been kept deliberately low. 'With all the greenery behind them, they almost disappear,' says Stephen.

Because it is a roof garden, structural soil had to be brought in to comply with the necessary weight restrictions, and plants were chosen to provide sequential year-round interest, according to the soil depth available. 'The raised planter behind the sofa marks the edge of the dig underneath, so that gave us a natural line for deeper root growth along that back edge,' he says.

All the colours in the garden have been chosen to complement or contrast with both the chocolate travertine paving and the trellis with its inset mirror, which is covered in climbers and has been painted the Farrow & Ball shade, Mouse's Back. 'We used this trellis to give a bit of drama. It's a big mirror, and it's lovely because it gives you amazing vistas and views of the garden.'

Plants were chosen to provide sequential year-round interest



ISLAND LIFE ▶
Trained *Platanus* x *acerifolia* in the island planter and raised beds are underplanted with white hydrangeas, *Rosa* Tranquility, *Iris* 'Kent Pride', *Heuchera* 'Marmalade' and *Hemerocallis* 'Golden Chimes'. The slatted timber sofa by Roda is upholstered with exterior-grade fabric (www.rodaonline.com).



▼ **IN THREES**
On the front terrace, where you can see a skylight to the rooms below, three clipped balls of box stand in pots on clay plinths.



◀ **SUPER SCREEN**
Here, Stephen clad a metal planter with clay panels to ensure continuity in the design. Planted up with a white camellia hedge and box balls within a carpet of box, it provides a screen for a second terrace below. *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' softens the decorous planting here.





FRONT OF HOUSE
Three huge clay pots stand sentinel on a terrace paved with Portland stone at the front of the house. They are 1.2m in diameter and nearly 1.5m tall, and are unique to Stephen Woodhams Design. Three *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* are underplanted with white hydrangeas, *Iris* 'Kent Pride', and *Heuchera* 'Marmalade', although this scheme changes with the seasons. Formal structure is created with low box hedging. →



▲ **DINING OUT**

Stephen commissioned The Garden Trellis Company to make the table, which slots into underlit, U-shaped bench seating. The hydro cushions can be left out all year, as Stephen has 300 exterior fabrics to choose from.



▲ **MIRROR MAGIC**

The mirror is 2.5m tall and is set into the trellis, which is planted with climbers such as *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and *Rosa* Crown Princess Margareta. At night, the planter is lit with LEDs around the base so it appears to be floating.

Lighting was a crucial part of the design... The warm tone of the lighting creates a feeling of intimacy and connects the spaces



▲ **COPPER TONES**

Several pleached *Magnolia* x *loebneri* 'Merrill' stand against the trellis, underplanted with more box balls. *Pomme*, a striking sculpture by Claude Lalanne, reflects the soft LED lighting in the garden beautifully.



▲ **SITTING PRETTY**

The lower terrace at the front of the property is a tranquil seating area. Planting is minimal, with just a box ball in an oversized pot. The furniture is from McKinnon and Harris. Uplighters and downlighters illuminate the space.



IN THE FRAME

The warm tone of the lighting placed cleverly under the step overhang creates a feeling of intimacy and connects the spaces. Garden canes form a framework to encourage the plane trees to grow to meet each other. Once joined, they will shield the seating area from the high windows next door, and provide natural shade.



LIGHT FANTASTIC

Lighting was a crucial part of the design, and Stephen worked with Sanjit Bahra, from Design Plus Light, to achieve the effect he was looking for (www.designpluslight.com). 'He lights gardens brilliantly,' says Stephen. Strips were set into the paving along the front of the long clay-clad planter to give a strong line of light and a sleek effect.

DESIGNER PROFILE

STEPHEN WOODHAMS

trained at RHS Wisley in the 1980s, and set up his garden design business in 1989. In 1994, he won his first Gold medal for a show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show; and in subsequent years he has won many more Gold and Silver medals for his work. In 2008, he opened a design studio on the island of Ibiza, and now he works extensively in the Balearics. He has written widely on garden design, and his latest book, *Garden Design Solutions* (Jacqui Small, £25) will be published in late September. www.stephenwoodhams.com



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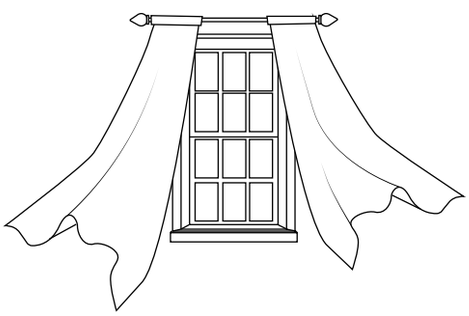
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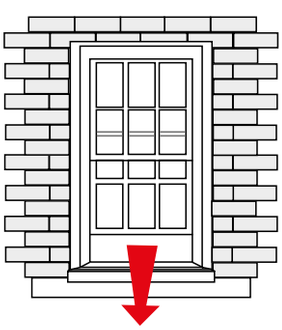
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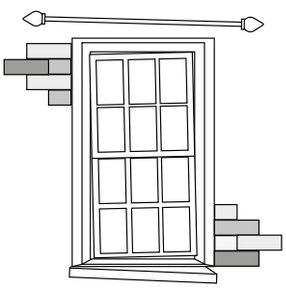
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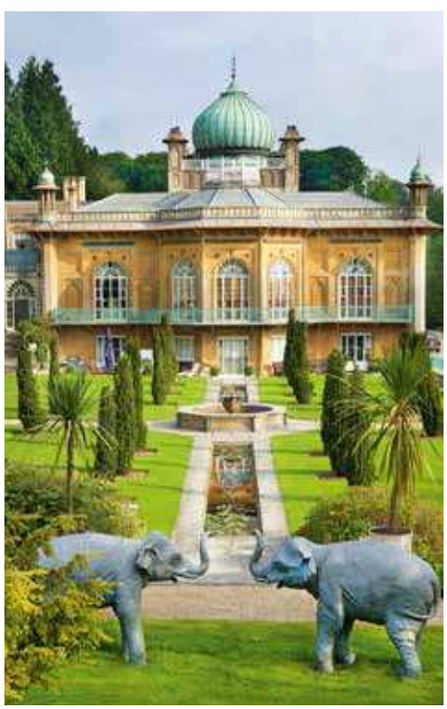
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IMAGES FROM LEFT *WILDER SHORES OF DESIRE* BY MARC QUINN AT YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK - JONTY WILDE ELEPHANTS AT SEZINCOTE GARDEN - MARIANNE MAJERUS *BITE* BY DAVID HARBER - CLIVE NICHOLS

FOCAL POINT

Sculpture helps draw views into a garden or landscape by providing a natural focus, and it can also help steer people on a journey around it. For example, a sculpture positioned between the front door of a house and a gate leading to an area beyond the garden will act as a 'signpost' on how to get there. A simple form or a well-defined piece of topiary can perform the function as effectively as an expensive artwork.

A sculpture will automatically emphasise an axis connecting the house with the garden or landscape, so think about which viewpoints you want to emphasise. An eye-catching sculpture, like the one above, can also draw the eye away from an area or view that is not so attractive.

ECHO THE SETTING

Creating a sculpture from a similar stone to that of the surrounding buildings helps to make the piece feel more relaxed, comfortable and appropriate. A strong juxtaposition of a modern sculptural form being placed within a traditional courtyard, however, will stand out much more. As well as making sure that a sculpture complements the buildings, surfaces and walls around it, such as these elephants in the exotic setting of Sezincote (*above*), it is equally important that the surrounding planting also makes sense.

A good example might be a classical stone sculpture working particularly well at the end of a green avenue of hornbeam.

MATERIALS MATTER

The choice of material used to create a sculpture is every bit as important as its size, form and the context of the piece. A sculpture should relate to everything around it, and be integrated fully within the design of a garden. A sculpture constructed from polished steel will produce a pronounced focal point within a garden, while a sculpture carved from dark stone or weathered timber will exert a more subtle influence, which people will discover. Think about how the setting and the piece itself may change over time.

For example, bronze is very bright, but it soon weathers to a darker colour, so if the aim is for the sculpture to be noticed from a distance, choose planting that will provide a lighter backdrop.

To find out more about Marcus' work, visit www.marcusbarnett.com

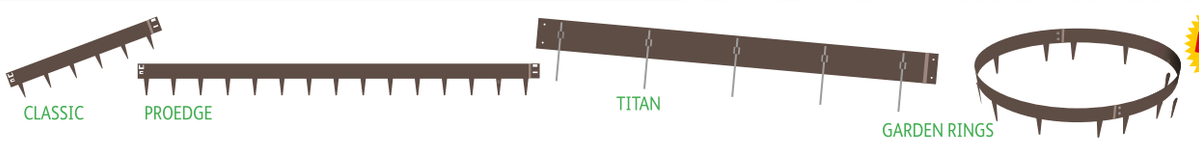
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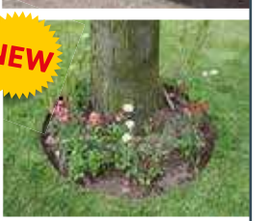
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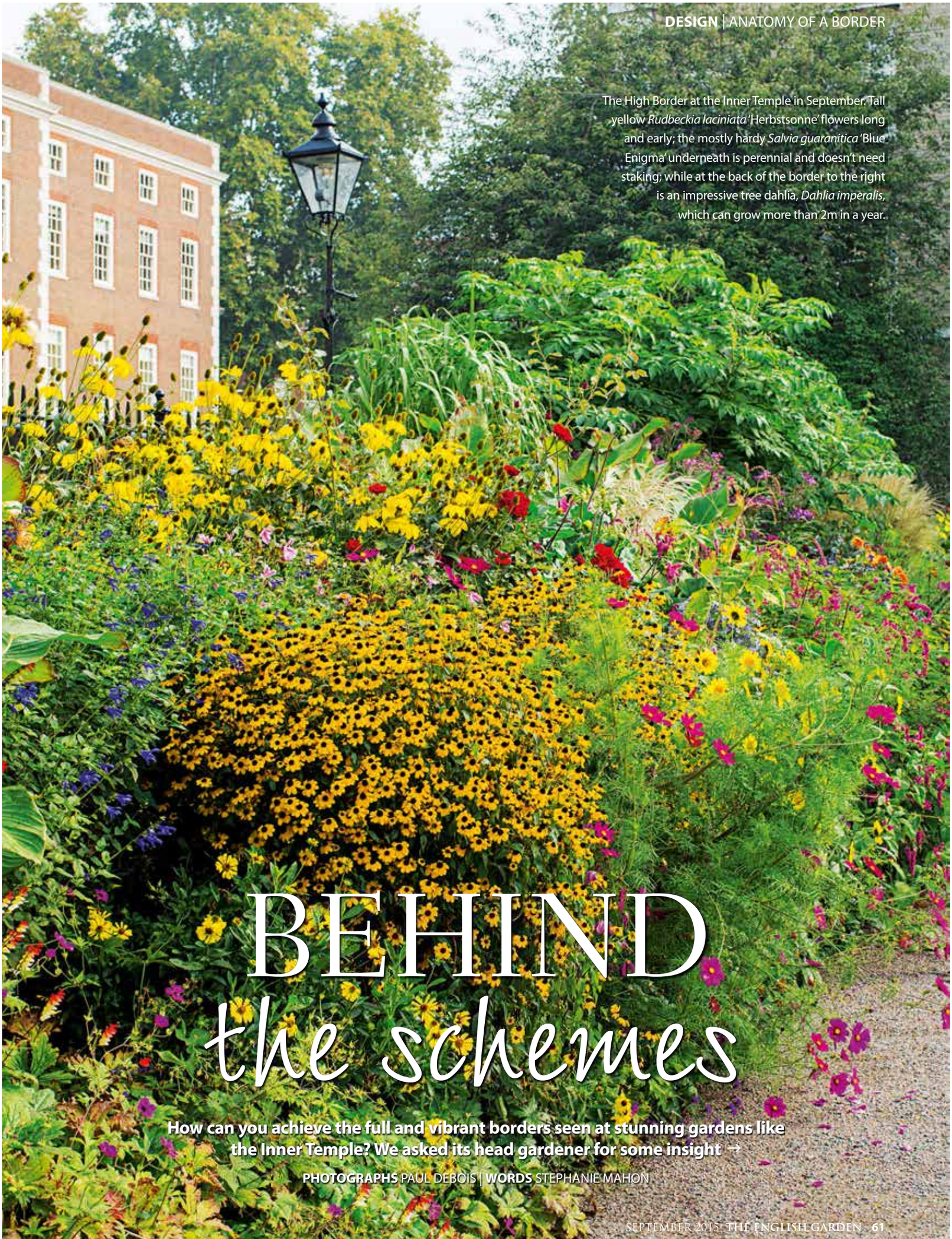
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The High Border at the Inner Temple in September. Tall yellow *Rudbeckia laciniata* 'Herbstsonne' flowers long and early; the mostly hardy *Salvia guaranitica* 'Blue Enigma' underneath is perennial and doesn't need staking; while at the back of the border to the right is an impressive tree dahlia, *Dahlia imperalis*, which can grow more than 2m in a year.

BEHIND *the schemes*

How can you achieve the full and vibrant borders seen at stunning gardens like the Inner Temple? We asked its head gardener for some insight →

PHOTOGRAPHS PAUL DEBOIS | **WORDS** STEPHANIE MAHON



Andrea Brunsendorf has been head gardener at the Inner Temple in London for eight years, bringing in a signature style of bold planting for which she has become renowned. The gardens are open to the legal eagles of the Inner Temple, and also the public most days, so they must have colour and interest throughout the year. Andrea relishes this challenge, and has developed methods of successional planting to make sure the borders are blooming for as many months as possible. Although the gardens cover three acres and she has a team of two full-time gardeners plus volunteers, Andrea believes elements of what she does can easily be emulated in home gardens, for interest all year.

There are two main components to her system of planting: the framework and seasonal highlights. The framework of her border is made up of things that stay in place, including perennials, grasses and shrubs. These are the 'anchor plants' that provide structure, which can range from asters and tree dahlias to tetrapanax. Into this framework, she introduces seasonal interest from plants like cannas and dahlias, bulbs like tulips, and annuals such as cosmos and tithonia. Like bedding, these are planted for a few months and then taken out, with something else swapped in for the next season.

This methodology gives a very long life to the border, starting with bulbs and annuals like forget-me-nots in spring, moving onto perennials in early summer, and then late summer plants that keep the show going into November. 'It's about 60% perennial framework to 40% seasonal change plants,' Andrea explains. 'We have large borders here, and it is on a bigger scale than most gardens, but I would encourage people to adopt some of these ideas and change things more often, even if it is just a small pocket in a border,' she says.

For building great borders, Andrea has a few tips for getting a good effect. 'Don't be afraid to use contrasting colours - this can look really good with a lot of green to →



LEFT The planting is dense and varied. From far left, front: the short variegated bamboo *Pleioblastus auricomus* is a real favourite of Andrea's. It looks good beside *Aster pyrenaeus* 'Lutetia', an early flowering aster that works well at the front of a border. Further along, behind the last bench, is grass *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Rotsilber', which is good for small gardens as it only grows to 1.5m and is a slow clump-forming type. It is also good at the front of a scheme.

Andrea developed the planting to make sure the borders are blooming for months

BELOW Another section of the High Border offers diverse colours and textures. At the back stands tall grass *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberfeder'. Andrea says it needs space but offers a long season of interest through winter. Pink *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Dazzler' is a great seasonal highlight - this annual works well for foliage as well as flowers. Behind the cleomes, which Andrea didn't pinch but let grow tall, are tithonias and tropical-looking *Canna* 'Grande', which she also uses as a foliage plant. The combination of the cannas with orange dahlia 'Wigo Super' and hot pink *Dahlia coccinea* 'Mary Keen' is a look Andrea would repeat again. At the front are the weeping cerise flowers of *Persicaria orientalis*, a great filler. This annual can be sown into spare ground in January, as it needs the cold to germinate, and then transplanted early to its final position.





RIGHT The large leaves of *Tetrapanax* 'Rex' offer an impressive counterpoint to the planting below. Red rose 'Florence Mary Morse' flowers from May to December, and doesn't need deadheading, but has no scent. Pale-blue *Salvia uliginosa* isn't hardy in all areas but, like other blue plants, helps the border look deeper. Behind, *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' mingles with dark-blue *Aconitum carmichaelii* 'Kelmscott', which flowers in late September.

→ diffuse it. And don't underestimate green, as it offers great shades and textures. Play around with heights, but do keep proportions in mind when you are planting.'

Andrea also has insider secrets for making borders look better for longer. 'I am a big believer in staking early,' she explains. 'I put bamboo canes in when I am planting, not later. If you wait and something collapses, you can't repair that damage, and the hole it makes is so obvious.' The second thing she advises is to be vigilant about deadheading. 'Do it prematurely if necessary,' Andrea says, 'if something looks like it is on it's way out. Be confident and aggressive with it.' The third thing she advises is to keep borders well watered, to avoid problems like mildew. 'Cleomes and roses can suffer, but if you see mildew appearing, you should deadhead or prune and water to reduce the effects.'

Crown Office Row, London EC4Y. Open 12.30-3pm each weekday, except in high winds. www.innertemple.org.uk

Head gardener Andrea's favourite border plants

Andrea experiments every year with new plants and combinations, but she does have some reliable performers she returns to every season:



***Aralia californica* & *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Silberspinne'** make a great combination. The grass is small, growing to 1.1-1.5m. Aralia reaches 2-3m, has a long season and makes a good stopper at the end of a border. The white flowers become these amazing purple seedheads.



***Cleome spinosa* 'Violet Queen'** is a favourite of Andrea's even though it can get mildew. Pinch out the growing tips at 40-50cm for stouter plants that are less likely to suffer. An annual, grow it each year and use to fill gaps in the border from late spring to early autumn.



***Dahlia* 'Hillcrest Royal'** is one of the many dahlias Andrea grows for seasonal highlights. She uses them like annuals, planting in June and taking out in November. 'They are the epitome of late summer,' she says. 'They are so versatile, and easy to grow too.'



***Salvia involucrata* 'Bethellii'** isn't fully hardy in some areas, so Andrea recommends lifting in autumn to overwinter inside. It is, however, an excellent 'transition plant' to help get through the down times in the display between peaks, and keeps flowering on until November. ◆

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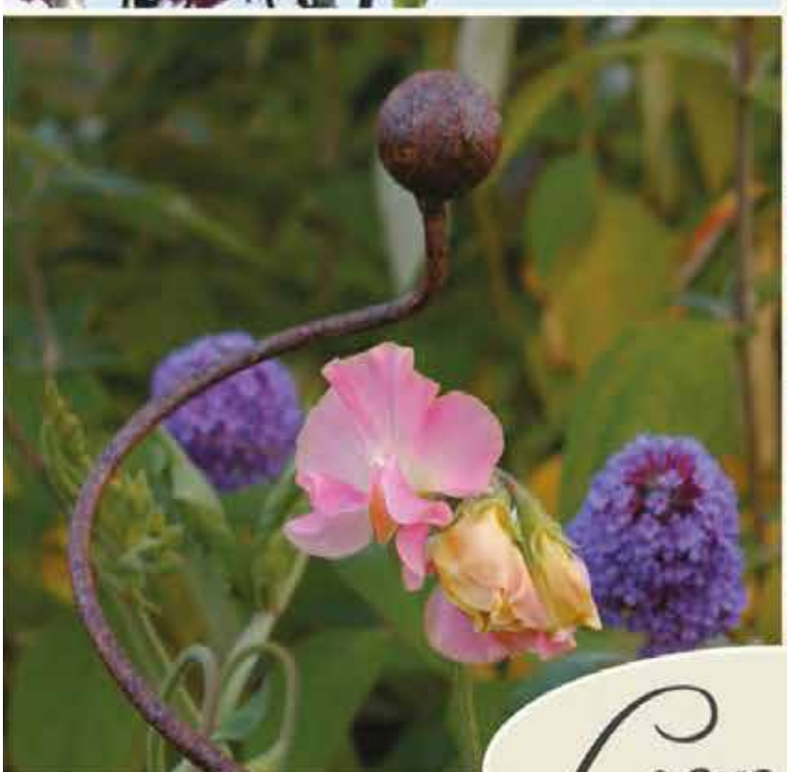
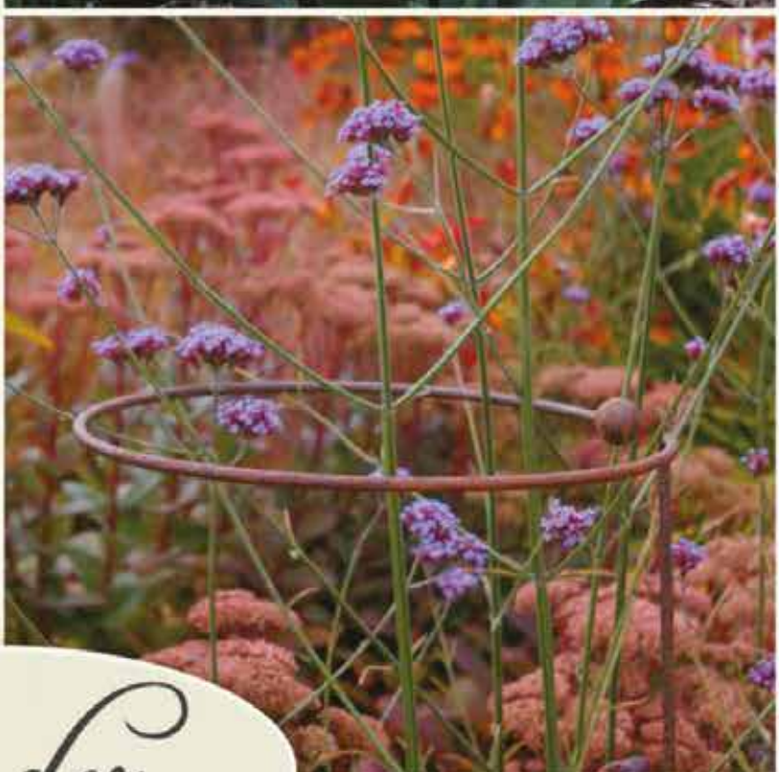
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Hard TRUTH

Hard landscaping is a big investment, so it pays to choose carefully. We guide you through the options

WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS

Good hard landscaping can transform your garden - and the range of options is huge. Decide on the look you want - contemporary or traditional? Then set a budget. Prices can vary hugely, but many companies offer online pricing calculators to help you. Link the hard landscaping to the materials used in your property, and use only two or three complementary materials for a streamlined look.

FRONT GARDENS

If you want to cover more than five square metres with an impermeable material, with nowhere for the rainwater to drain, you'll need planning permission. You don't need planning permission if the area is less than five square metres, if the new surface is permeable (gravel, permeable concrete paving or porous asphalt), or if the rainwater can drain into a lawn or border.

The RHS 2015 Greening Grey Britain report revealed that three times as many front gardens are paved over compared to 10 years ago. A quarter of UK front gardens are now completely paved over, and nearly a third have no plants. This is harmful for wildlife, and has been linked to increasing pollution, high temperatures during heatwaves, and risk of flooding. So be sure to include some planting in your plan, too - for ideas, visit www.rhs.org.uk/ggb

PAVING

Stone is a classic, hard-wearing surface that improves with age. York stone is attractive, but slippery when wet. Reclaimed York stone is much sought after, and is not necessarily cheaper; the slabs will be of different thicknesses →





TOP The Arctic Granite 'Revolve' feature by Stonemarket. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT** Lucent paving from Stonemarket is actually ceramic with a stone-like image imprinted on it; Marshalls' Fairstone garden paving is also available in steps kits with bullnose edges; Bradstone's StoneMaster paving has a contemporary look; Bradstone's Old Town Chelsea Cobble, a new style.



















TOP, FROM LEFT Marshalls' Fairstone Granite Eclipse paving; Stonemarket's Opera Smooth Finish Garden paving has a granite look but is made from a blend of different stones. **MIDDLE, FROM LEFT** Marshalls' new Woodstone decking is made of concrete so does not warp or rot; ipe hardwood decking from Silva Timber will last the test of time. **BELOW LEFT** Bradstone's Smooth Natural Sandstone Spinning Circle feature is surrounded with pebbles, creating a real focal point in a small space.

→ and sizes. Pretty Portland stone is slip-resistant. Sandstone (mostly from India and China) is cheaper, while stone-effect concrete is the budget option.

WONDERFUL WOOD

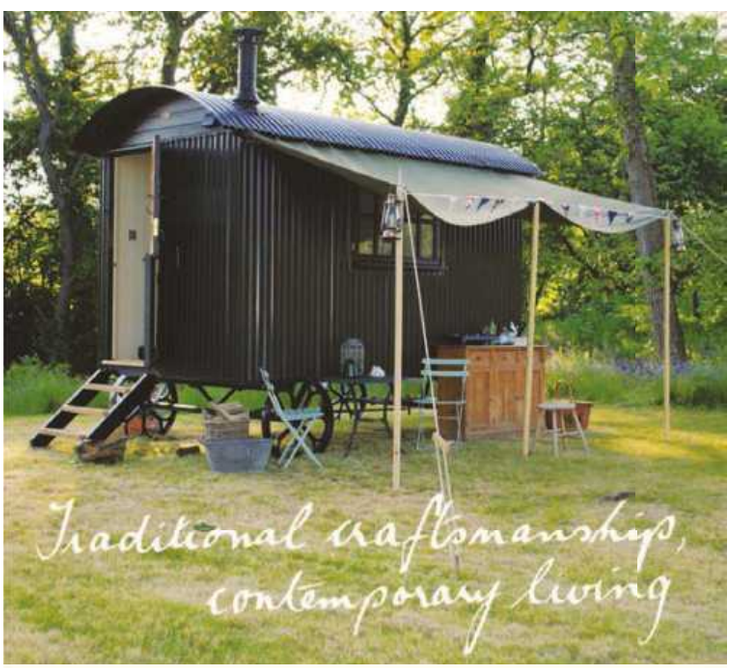
Decking looks good with modern or traditional homes, is quick to install, and a good option if you need to deal with changes of level. Softwood is cheapest, and lasts for around 15 years if properly treated. Hardwood, such as ipe or garapa, is more pricey but lasts longer. Always check it's from a sustainable source. If you like the look of wood, but grip is important to you, clean it regularly or consider composite manmade decking boards. They are anti-slip, look realistic and come in a variety of finishes. They are also UV stable, so won't change colour over time.

OTHER OPTIONS

Gravel is economical and quick to install. As a rule, 10-18mm stones are used on driveways, and 6-10mm stones on paths. Lay a permeable membrane to keep weeds at bay, and add edging, otherwise the gravel will stray. Self-binding gravels, such as Breedon gravel, contain fine particles that make the surface appear more compacted; they're less prone to scuffing.

Bricks (recycled ones are especially attractive) can be laid in straight lines for paths, or used to create patterns or edging. Pebbles and cobbles can be used loose, or set into mortar and turned into beautiful mosaic designs. ◆





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SEEDS OF CHANGE

As summer fades to autumn, **Tamsin Westhorpe** shares the plants and practical tasks at Stockton Bury Gardens in Herefordshire

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL

Shall I or shan't I? That is the question now. It's the month when you can get into the borders and start to clear faded perennials, or decide to leave things be. As Stockton Bury is open to the public, we tend to remove perennials that are past their best or covering up those in flower now. The garden too is undecided as to which season it is in - summer and autumn merge, and the colours leap from the summer spectrum to the golden russets familiar to autumn.

The trees waiting to put on their full autumn show include the cercidiphyllum - weeding under this tree is a joy, as the leaves smell of candyfloss this month. Some of flowers we admire now in the garden are *Ipomoea tricolor* 'Heavenly Blue', nerines, *Clematis potaninii,* rudbeckias, colchicums, hesperantha (schizostylis to you and I!), asters and the small but scented *Apios tuberosa*.

The seedpods of plants cause as much intrigue as the flowers among visitors at this time of year. The most impressive are those of the giant 2.5m stems of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* - so impressive that I have kept the flower spike from last year as a memento. It is also now that I collect seeds from the sweet peas.

The apples are nearly ready to pick, and the last of the tomatoes add a splash of colour to the plate. Damsons are over, but it is still a month when the gardener-cook has a ball. →

ABOVE A wall covering of foliage from *Parthenocissus quinquefolia,* with head-height *Rudbeckia laciniata* 'Herbstsonne' and golden *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer' at its knee.

JOBS THIS MONTH

Clear and collect

BELOW The foliage of *Lamium orvala* offers little through the autumn, so cut it back.

The big leaf clear up has begun. Until the garden is closed to the public, I have my trusty broom at my side to keep up with the fall on a daily basis. While we're on the subject of leaves, some of the roses are still in bloom, but after a long summer those prone to it are showing signs of black spot. To stop the spread, clear up the fallen leaves under the plant and destroy them.

Some of the perennials that are not likely to give a solid enough autumn show are cut back now, and the stems composted. The majority of our perennials aren't cut back until October or November, but some gardeners leave this task until February - it's up to you.

Our autumn-fruiting raspberries are picked, and we are still eating our way through the annual glut of courgettes - soon to be marrows.

Unless you are experiencing an Indian summer, you can look to remove the shading from the greenhouse; and on a wet day, why not take the opportunity to clean the greenhouse? Before you know it, you will be sowing sweet peas for next year.





Fruits of your labour

The garden is surrounded by cider orchards, so harvesting the odd apple is a family pastime. As a child, I quickly learnt the difference in taste between eaters and cookers - thanks to a few tummy aches. However, identifying one eater from another is not so easy. We grow 'Egremont Russet', 'Laxton's Superb' and 'Lord Lambourne', to name but a few. For identification of an unknown apple, take a sample to a local apple day event or a specialist nursery. My go-to place for trees locally is Frank P Matthews' nursery.

A fruit that gets lots of attention for its exotic look in the garden is the Asian pear. Its fruits are perfect golden nuggets, and I have yet to encounter any of the usual fruit problems. There are a few varieties of *Pyrus pyrifolia*, but we grow 'Kumoi', as it has the best flavour and stores well. Although edible, I would recommend this tree for its looks rather than fruit. It grows well in a sunny, sheltered spot and is self-fertile. Now is the time to harvest these fruits - if they can be easily picked with a slight twist of the wrist when they are ripe. Discard or eat any damaged fruits and place the rest in an old fruit box in a frost-free, well-ventilated, dark place that is about 5ºC. For us, this is the cellar.

REMEMBER TO...

Keep deadheading, to keep annual bedding displays going until the first frosts. Spend a few minutes a day pinching off faded flowerheads to prolong your displays. →











IN SEASON

FOLIAGE, FLOWERS AND SEEDS

It's not just the flowers that cause interest at this time. Foliage and seed pods are just as enchanting.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Reveal the flowers of *Colchicum* 'Waterlily' by clearing any neighbouring perennials; *Hesperantha coccinea* 'Major'; in the unheated glasshouse, pots of solenostemon add reliable colour thanks to their foliage; *Melianthus major* is grown primarily for its foliage - it needs a south-facing, sheltered spot to make it through winter; *Euonymus europaeus*; the impressive seedpods of *Decaisnea fargesii* were give to us by a visitor and are known as dead man's fingers; an unknown species of lespedeza given to the garden as a gift; *Colquhounia coccinea* needs the protection of a south-facing wall.









IN DEPTH

Making leaf mould

A little bit of time invested now in making leaf mould will pay dividends in the garden later. In large gardens, leaves tend to be collected and placed into a large wire-framed compost heap to rot down. In smaller gardens, the process of making a leaf mould can be speeded up. All you need is a pile of deciduous leaves, a heavy duty refuse sack and a tie.

Avoid conifers and evergreens, as their leaves and needles can take time to break down, and thick leaves such as horse chestnut and walnut ideally should be shredded. The easiest way to do this is to collect them from under the tree with a mower - this kills two birds with one stone. Place the leaves in a refuse bag and add some water if they are dry. Tie the top of the bag, and pierce some holes in it. Then leave them behind the shed out of sight, and every couple of months turn the bag upside down. Within about 15 months, it will be ready to use as a mulch.

Watch my how-to video on making leaf mould at www.theenglishgarden.co.uk







BELOW LEFT Make use of your fallen leaves and turn them into a valuable mulch. **BOTTOM LEFT** Rake up as much as you can. **BELOW** Place them in a wire-frame compost heap or a heavy duty refuse bag.

LEAVES IMAGE/SHUTTERSTOCK

TOP TASK

Bulb planting



BELOW & RIGHT Now is the time to plant daffodils. If planting in turf, bear in mind that you won't be able to cut the grass next spring until the bulb foliage has turned yellow.

This is the month that I get out my RHS Malvern Spring Festival catalogue - inside, I have noted the spring-flowering bulbs I admired last spring at the event. It is at this show that my uncle and I order our tulips from Bloms Bulbs, and we look forward to our parcel arriving soon. We try different varieties each year, and grow them all in pots to go on the porch.

Tulips should be planted in November, but narcissi can be planted at the end of September and October. If planting to create a natural drift in turf, simply throw your bulbs, as this will give you the most natural look. For easy planting, use a bulb planter. If you are keen to plant in grass, consider *Narcissus cyclamineus* 'Jenny', as it will spread in turf. And for slightly later daffodils, you can't beat the pheasant's eye type, *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus* - I favour them for their looks and scent.

When buying bulbs, look for the largest and avoid those that are damaged. Very small bulbs may not produce a flower in the first year.



If planting to create a natural drift in turf, simply throw your bulbs, as this will give you the most natural look

PROPAGATION STATION

Sowing honeysuckle seeds



RIGHT & FAR RIGHT A messy job, but the seed needs to be picked out of the fruits; seeds need cold over winter to initiate germination.



It's always fun to propagate your favourite plants, and one of mine is honeysuckle. Now is the time to sow seed fresh, or store the seed in a refrigerator over winter, mixed with moist compost, for up to 12 weeks, then germinate at 15°C.

1. Remove the seeds from the berries over a piece of kitchen paper. Let them dry out on the kitchen paper.
2. Place the seed on a bed of seed compost, and lightly cover and water.
3. Place in a cold frame, and wait for signs of germination in spring. →

Label plants

BELOW & RIGHT Use the *RHS Plant Finder* to check your spellings. Tamsin uses handmade wooden labels that are wired on.

If you are on a mission to learn the plant names in your garden, make a note now of what is where. I am keen to label our many trees this winter, but the danger of this is that some of the labels will no doubt be pruned out by mistake - you have been warned. Labelling plants is an ongoing task in an open garden. They are regularly taken, pruned out or pulled out of the ground by birds. There is no easy answer, but I am inclined to think that a garden carrying too many labels can look untidy, so be subtle.





Labelling plants is an ongoing task in an open garden. They are regularly taken, pruned out or pulled out by the birds

New features

Every year, we welcome local artists to the garden as part of Herefordshire Art Week (which this year will be held from 12-20 September). Many of the artists are creating features for gardens, so we succumbed to this rather striking pair by www.metalsmiths.co.uk

Before buying and placing art in your garden, you need to be clear about what you hope it will achieve. Is it to add a bit of humour? To draw people down the garden or to add year-round interest? Too much garden art creates a haphazard effect, but get it right and the results are wonderful.

We have placed our metal poultry just outside a building which used to be my great aunt's hen house, and as they are lightweight, we have the option of trying them in different places. ◆



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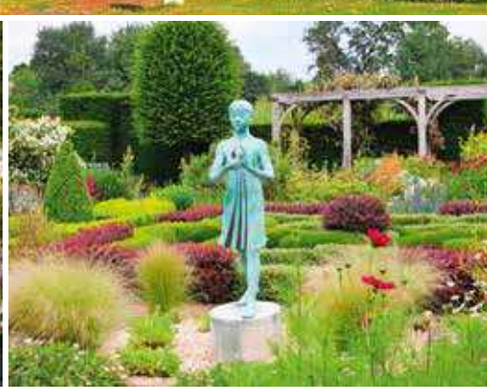
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TOP GRASS

Having a great lawn next season is all down to the work you do now, says **David Hedges-Gower**, so reconsider your autumn maintenance routine



The traditional British lawn remains one of the most enduring features of the UK's gardens, and a core feature in many a winning garden at prestigious national shows. All lawns - not just those immaculately manicured greens - have a full 12-month cycle, and need corresponding help from us if they are to thrive and be healthy. The milder winters are transforming our gardening habits - instead of 'putting the garden to bed' for four months, we're spending more time out there throughout the year. If you ignore it for part of the year, you will simply spend more time and money putting right all kinds of problems the following spring. →

IMAGE/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's important to know how to prepare your lawn for autumn and winter. This also means busting a few lingering myths about good, simple lawn care.



1 MOWING

The general consensus is that we don't need to mow our lawns in winter, but that depends on your grass - even in mid-winter, it may continue some slow growth. If so, your mower won't be getting its usual winter break. The rule is simple: if it doesn't stop growing, then don't stop mowing. Just keep the cut high and refrain from mowing in frost, snow and extreme wetness.

2 AERATION

We have all heard that we should aerate the lawn and then apply sand. Your soil is vital, and after an active summer, the lawn and its soil is - quite literally - squashed. You can hollow-tine aerate the lawn, but it's worth knowing that you don't always need to fill up the holes with sand - they can remain open channels for air, water and good strong root growth.

ABOVE You can feed your lawn in autumn/winter to boost the grass.
BELOW LEFT It might take more than a wire rake to scarify properly.

3 SCARIFYING

It is commonly believed that autumn scarification is all about moss control. Scarifying is an important task in September or October, and in spring, but it's more to do with controlling the thatch layer. Moss control is just a happy consequence of this, as it makes it harder for new moss to take hold. Many people feel that since their lawns are small, a wire rake will do the job; and sure enough, it will pull out some of your dead matter... but that's all. Using a bladed machine instead will cut shoots and stolons, which also invigorates our natural grasses, getting them to tiller and thicken. You may also have read that you should use moss killer before scarifying, but in my opinion, don't - this simply kills the top part of the moss. Apply it afterwards, so that it can reach down to the bottom of the plant.



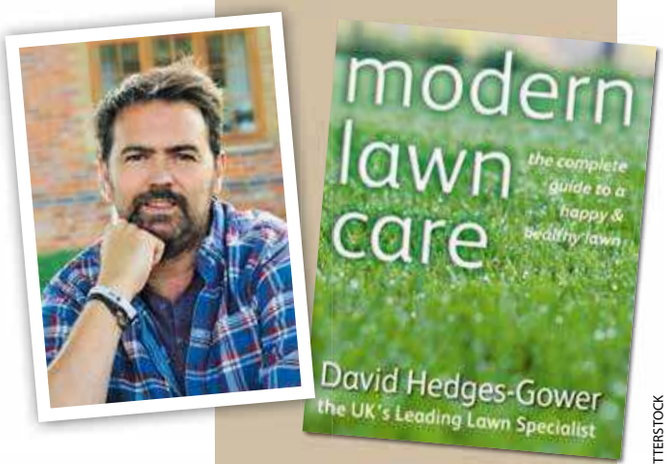
The general consensus is that we don't need to mow our lawns in winter, but that depends on your grass - even in mid-winter, it may continue some slow growth

4 NUTRITION

You might think that your grass doesn't do much in winter, so it doesn't need a feed. But beneath the surface, out of sight, the roots are continuing to work hard through the coldest months to maintain the grass above. An autumn/winter feed will make all the difference, and give the lawn an important booster against disease too. Do this following scarifying for maximum impact.

So if you find yourself out in the garden more often this autumn and winter, spare some of that time for your lawn. It will thank you. In fact, ask any lawn professional and they will all tell you the same thing - what you do now to help your lawn through winter will pay dividends next year. ◆

DAVID HEDGES-GOWER
is a lawn specialist who is an adviser for Homebase and an ambassador for Greensleeves. His book, *Modern Lawn Care*, is available from Amazon and also his website - go to www.davidhedges-gower.com



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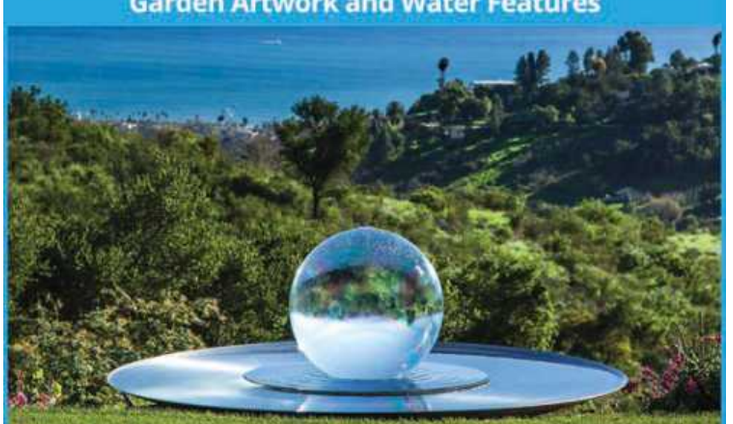
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Healing ways

Jan Broady works for the charity Thrive in Reading, where he uses gardening to improve the lives of people with disabilities

I always had an enthusiasm for gardening, even at a young age. I would collect pips from my dad after he had eaten an apple, and try growing them. My education was fairly science-based until I went to university and studied Biblical Studies. After that, I did a PGCE (teacher training course) in Religious Education at a secondary school.

I enjoyed my time working in the special needs department at the school, so I decided to support adults with learning difficulties for a year at a charity in Llandudno, North Wales, before relocating to Reading.

I got an office-based role at Thrive, but always had one eye on the garden. Eventually, a vacancy opened up, which enabled me to join as a trainee horticultural therapist. I studied horticulture on the job for a year.

I've been a full horticultural therapist for five years now. The job is essentially meeting people's needs with the needs of the garden. People come into the profession from all kinds of backgrounds. You don't need a teaching or social care qualification, but similar experience working with people helps.

We work with people who have survived strokes, those on the autistic spectrum, and also people with mental health difficulties. We also have one gardener who has been blind since birth.

I am currently working at Thrive with 14-16 year olds who find school difficult, but I also help off-site at some projects where we partner with the National Trust, such as The Vyne, Sandham Memorial Chapel and Basildon Park. My students help with seasonal gardening tasks such as planting out, and conservation jobs including removing invasive species.

It's satisfying to see my students develop and their confidence boosted. For one particular autistic student, his communication has come on leaps and bounds.

I love the mixture of plants and people - one would be poorer without the other. ◆

IMAGE/SEAN AFNAN **WORDS**/VICTORIA MASON

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Aster novae-angliae 'Lachsglut' is a tidy plant, ideal for the smaller garden.

ASTER LA VISTA

National Collection Holder **Brian Ellis** proclaims the virtues of the New Englnd aster, which is mildew free, doesn't need staking and comes in many colours and heights →

PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM



LEFT 'Barr's Blue' is a vigorous plant that reaches more than 1.5m.
BELOW FROM LEFT 'Lou Williams' is a robust variety; 'Herbstschnee' is the only white variety; 'Purple Dome' is one of the most compact cultivars.

Michaelmas daisies are late-summer favourites - solid, reliable old friends, happy to stay in the background all summer, then putting on a show just when you need one, from late August until mid-October.

But first, the technicalities. *Aster novae-angliae*, or New England asters, are now officially called *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*. Years of recent genetic research has separated asters into 13 different genera, despite their many similarities. At my nursery, we'll continue to use the name 'aster' for some time to avoid confusion. As a National Collection holder, I think the new name will have to be tattooed on my arm before it becomes second nature!

Originating from the New England region of the US, *Aster novae-angliae* were introduced to the UK in the 18th century. Their popularity has ebbed and flowed over the years, but now more than 70 varieties are currently listed, with new cultivars being introduced every year.

Usually free-standing, their tight clumps stand at about 1.2-1.5m tall, topped in late summer and autumn with masses of upward-facing daisies. They have a strong central disc, surrounded by an outer ray of single or semi-double petals. Colours range from white through pink, cerise, lilac, violet and blue.

With their woody stems, they lack interest from the neck down, so they are best placed towards the back of the border, or among other tall plants and grasses, to bring freshness to an otherwise fading display. As the ultimate bee and butterfly magnet, they seem to have an optimistic disregard for the oncoming winter.

Solid reliable old friends, they stay in the background all summer, putting on a show just when you need one, from late August to mid-October









Aster novae-angliae **'Barr's Blue'** is a beast - in the nicest possible way. It has vigour, reaching more than 1.5m, and has large lavender-blue flowers. It's very striking, but needs elbow room. Mine is as wide as it is high, and it's great for impact in a large border.

At the other extreme is *A. novae-angliae* **'Purple Dome'**, one of the shortest, most compact varieties, reaching no more than 45-60cm. It forms a neat dome that's 60-90cm wide, smothered with vibrant purple flowers. It contrasts very well with the later-flowering yellows and oranges of rudbeckias, coreopsis and heleniums.

'Herbstschnee' is in a class of its own. At present, it is the only white form, with smallish daisies at 90cm-1.2m, and there's always a place for white in the garden. →

ABOVE Subtle 'Foxy Emily' reaches 1.2m high. **RIGHT** 'Helen Picton' has vibrant violet petals and is named after another National Collection holder.

HOW TO GROW *ASTER NOVAE-ANGLIAE*

- ***Aster novae-angliae* prefer** a sunny aspect in rich soil that doesn't readily dry out.
- **They are generally free** of pests and diseases. Very occasional rust can be controlled by the removal of affected material. Aphids and slugs are rarely a problem, and tend to affect *Aster novi-belgii* more. Similarly, mildew isn't a worry, and regular division every three to four years improves health and vigour.
- **Divide or move clumps in spring**, and if cuttings are taken, do this as early as possible to develop plants that are strong enough to overwinter. Division is more reliable, however.
- **For group planting of asters**, place 60-90cm apart, but be aware of plant heights for each variety. Add a mulch of organic material between clumps at the end of the year.
- **You can give mature plants the 'Chelsea chop'**, and remove growing tips at the front of clumps to promote more flowers at a lower level. No staking is necessary if plants are grown in optimum conditions.







Aster novae-angliae are generally disease-free, and not prone to mildew like their shorter relatives, Aster novi-belgii

ABOVE, FROM LEFT
'Andenken an Alma Pötschke' has shocking pink blooms; 'Lye End Beauty' is tall and upright, reaching 1.5m; the flowers of 'Rosa Sieger' harmonise well with other plants.

→ The popular **'Andenken an Alma Pötschke'** thinks rather a lot of herself - she's loud, shocking and outrageous with fizzy pink blooms, and is widely available. But beware: her legs are unreliable and may need support. However, *A. novae-angliae* **'Foxy Emily'** is a different creature altogether. Quiet, sophisticated, warm powder-pink daisies with narrow, fingered petals stand at 1.2m high. **'Lachsglut'** has close sprays of glowing deep-pink daisies, and is a good variety for the smaller garden as it has a tidy stature. This shade of pink is easier to combine with other plants than the noisy 'Andenken an Alma Pötschke'.

A. novae-angliae **'Rosa Sieger'** sounds and looks like a folk singer from the 1960s - she has clear, rose-pink flowers, so doesn't shout out, but harmonises well. She's not too tall, at 90cm-1.2m. Meanwhile, **'Lye End Beauty'** is an old favourite from the nursery of the same name. Popular for good reason, it grows strong and upright to 1.5m, and has large lavender-pink daisies.

A. novae-angliae **'Helen Picton'** is named after the National Collection holder of the same name at Old Court Nurseries, and is one of my all-time favourites, with intense violet flowers contrasting with a golden-yellow central disc. It is similar to 'Marina Wolkonsky', but more vibrant and glowing.

Another favourite is **'Lou Williams'**, a good robust form that stands well. Bred by John Williams, honorary president of our local Warwickshire Plant Heritage Group, this one has beautiful deep rosy-cerise daisies.

Aster novae-angliae are generally disease free, and are not prone to mildew like their shorter relatives, *Aster novi-belgii*. An organic, rich, moisture-retentive soil will give them a good start, and for best results, plant them in full sun. The only maintenance needed is to cut plants back to the ground when they have finished flowering, and every few years lift and split the ageing clump, always in spring, to rejuvenate growth. I always propagate my plants by division, which is a reliable method. But cuttings can be taken, also in spring, to achieve a plant that is large enough to survive the following winter.

WHERE TO SEE & BUY ASTERS

- **Avondale Nursery**, Mill Hill, Baginton, near Coventry CV8 3AG. Nursery and garden open March-September. The asters are at their best in mid- to late September. No mail order. Tel: +44 (0)7979 093096. www.avondalenursery.co.uk
- **Margaret Stone**, Brockamin, Old Hills, Callow End, Worcs WR2 4TQ. National Collection Holder with an open day on 4 October; also open by appointment. Tel: +44 (0)1905 830370.
- **The Picton Garden**, Old Court Nurseries, Walwyn Road, Colwall, Malvern, Worcs WR13 6QE. Tel: +44 (0)1684 540416. www.autumnasters.co.uk ◆

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A LAST HURRAH

Looking for a splash of late colour? **Dave Ward** from The Beth Chatto Gardens offers some top suggestions



Saxifraga Black Ruby

All summer long, the foliage of the glossy-leaved *Saxifraga* Black Ruby quietly craves closer inspection, which reveals an unexpected texture of fleshy, purple-tinted foliage, evenly covered in tiny, soft, teeth-like growths. Then, by September, as the foliage turns purple-black, you notice the flower buds emerging among the darkness. They explode the following month into the deepest candyfloss-pink you can imagine - all this taking place no more than 20cm from the ground. A moist, leafy yet well-drained soil suits best. Introduced from China by Robert Fortune, who also introduced tea plants into India.



Hesperantha coccinea 'Sunrise'

Just when we got used to pronouncing schizostylis (did we ever?), the scarlet river lily is now called hesperantha. It hails from Southern Africa, where *H. coccinea* never grows far from water. Sporadic flowerers through summer, they come into their own from late summer to autumn, given sufficient moisture and sunlight. The small, spreading rhizomes are hardy throughout most of the UK, but need extra protection in colder areas. 'Sunrise' was introduced by Eric Smith and Jim Archibald of The Plantsman nursery, who set out to create an improved pink cultivar. With large, well-proportioned pink flowers, it's one of the most welcome late-flowering perennials.



Sedum 'Herbstfreude'

Also known as 'Autumn Joy', this well-known cultivar originated at Georg Arends' nursery near Cologne, Germany. It has stood the test of time as a plant for all seasons, with apple-green, toothed foliage emerging in late winter. It is an unassuming but useful contrast for myriad spring and summer performers. September sees its massed, waxy flower buds open pink to brick-red for the bees to feast on. Try it underneath *Verbena bonariensis* for insect utopia. The flowerheads slowly and subtly fade to a warm brown, and remain a structural winter feature until cut down. Grow lean in a well-drained soil in full sun. Older clumps have a tendency to flop, which can be controlled with the 'Chelsea chop'.

IMAGES/ALL GAP PHOTOS FROM LEFT - NEIL HOLMES JONATHAN BUCKLEY PERNILLA BERGDAHL

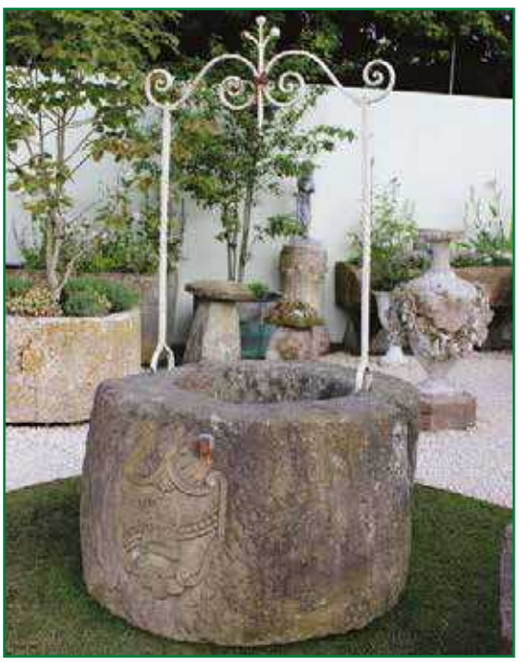
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IMAGE/GAP - J S SIRA

STARS FOR ANY SITUATION

Tired of trying your best with plants that won't flourish in your garden? **John Hoyland** suggests some fantastic cultivars that can cope with all conditions - the superstars that will grow just about anywhere

Given a choice between plants that require mollycoddling and lots of attention in order to thrive, and ones that will grow robustly and healthily without any fuss, I will always take the second lot. I will do that even more enthusiastically if they prosper wherever I plant them, and reward my neglect with beautiful flowers or attractive foliage. There aren't many of these plants - 'good doers', as gardeners have been calling them since the 19th century - and these few are indispensable in all gardens. Here are some of my favourite good doers, plants that will flourish in sun or shade, in poor or rich soil.

1 *Coronilla valentina* subsp. *glauca* 'Citrina'

The delicate foliage and fragile-looking stems of this shrub belie how robust it is and how easy to please, even growing in that most inhospitable of situations: dry soil in the shade of conifers. The pale lemon flowers have a spicy scent, and continue through those dreary months from November to March. After four or five years, they tend to become straggly and less vigorous, but are easy to renew from cuttings. 60cm tall. →



2 ← *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'

This is by far the best of the white-flowered Japanese anemones, with two rows of broad, clean-white petals and a central eye of yellow stamens. It grows to about 1.2m tall and is in flower from late July to mid-October. The foliage appears late in spring, so interplant with tall alliums or fritillaria. Established clumps can spread quickly, but are easy to control if they begin to wander into places where they are not wanted.



3 → *Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus*

This species daylily has simple, modest flowers that are a world away from the ostentatious modern hybrids. Although only in flower for a few weeks in June, each plant produces dozens of flowers with a fresh, clean fragrance. All daylilies will grow in sun or part-shade, but this one will even flower in deep shade. They start into growth early in the year, and the bright-green shoots are a perfect foil for spring bulbs. Grows to 75cm tall.



4 ← *Heuchera cylindrica* 'Greenfinch'

Over the past decades, a surfeit of heucheras have been introduced, with an astounding range of foliage colours. Most are undemanding plants that are as much at home in containers as they are in the border. 'Greenfinch', one of my favourite heucheras, is an old variety with lightly silvered leaves (*above left*). It makes an attractive ground cover, and in late summer has masses of 60cm-tall, upright flower stems that are covered in tiny, creamy-white bells.

IMAGE/ALL GAP FROM TOP: CAROLE DRAKE MAXINE ADCOCK S & O JONATHAN BUCKLEY



5 → *Bergenia* 'Overture'

Modern bergenia hybrids have none of the tatty leaves and gnarled, woody stems that used to be associated with the plant. This form has smart, rounded leaves that are apple-green in spring and glossy mahogany-red in winter. The stems, about 30cm tall, are covered in startling magenta-pink flowers from March to June. My plants flower next to the acid-yellow heads of a euphorbia: not a combination for the faint-hearted.



6 ← *Leucanthemella serotina*

A favourite of Gertrude Jekyll (she knew it as pyrethrum), this is a charming, tall perennial with bright-white flowers that light up the back of the border in autumn. All daisy-like flowers seem to be cheerful, and this one certainly adds a bit of sprightliness to the dying days of the year. On rich soil, it will grow to 2m tall and will need staking. Like the anemone, this has a tendency to spread, but again, is easy to control.



7 → *Alchemilla erythropoda*

If the ubiquitous *Alchemilla mollis*, with its large leaves and froth of acid-yellow flowers, is too strident (and too invasive) for your garden, try its more demure cousin, *A. erythropoda*. It forms a dome about 25cm tall of scalloped, velvety leaves that catch dew and raindrops that reflect their light as if they were mercury. The sprays of flowers are a pale chartreuse colour. In full sun, the leaves have a glaucous sheen with deep red edges. →

IMAGE/ALL GAP FROM TOP: JULIE DANSEREAU LYNN KEDDIE MARK BOLTON



8 ← *Aster lateriflorus* 'Horizontalis'

The purple-tinged foliage resembles a short (60cm tall) thicket throughout the summer that is then smothered in September and October with white-petalled flowers with a pale-purple centre. Lines of the plant woven through a border create a billowing wave of flowers. It keeps its structure during winter, providing shelter and food for insects, and looks magnificent when the intricate networks of stems are silvered with frost. Its name has recently changed to *Symphyotrichum lateriflorum* var. *horizontalis*.



9 → *Asplenium scolopendrium*

In the wild, I have seen this fern thriving in crevices in rocks and on the borders of woodland streams: a tribute to its versatile nature. Commonly called hart's tongue fern, its single, undivided fronds are unlike most other ferns. The glossy, evegreen foliage makes it a handsome plant throughout the year, but especially in winter. Its size varies enormously depending on growing conditions, from 15cm tall in poor, baking soil to 75cm tall in cool, rich loam.



10 ← *Euphorbia polychroma*

A gardening maven was surprised when I told her that the plant she was admiring was the unsophisticated, widely grown *Euphorbia polychroma*. It is easy to ignore the beauty of common-or-garden varieties. The zing that this spurge's acid-yellow domes bring to the garden is the perfect accompaniment to muscari, iris, spring bulbs and (in my garden) blue-flowered pulmonaria. In autumn, its foliage develops the red and golden tints of the season. ◆

IMAGES/ALL GAP FROM TOP: MARCUS HARPUR JASON INGRAM RICHARD BLOOM

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Extraordinary amateur

Dozens of plants were named after E A Bowles - but who was the man behind the moniker?

WORDS SARAH FEELEY

E A Bowles is considered the greatest amateur gardener of his day - some say, of all time. Edward Augustus Bowles was a self-taught gardener, botanist, botanical artist, plantsman, plant hunter, plant breeder and garden writer, after whom dozens of plants are named.

Born into a wealthy family at Myddelton House in Enfield in 1865, he was a sickly child, so was educated at home by the local vicar.

While studying at Cambridge, his interest in insects took him on expeditions to Wicken Fen, where he found what became known as Bowles' golden sedge, the first plant to bear his name. Amid a green-leaved clump of *Carex stricta*, he saw two or three shoots banded with yellow, and took a cutting back to his parents' garden.

Before he finished his studies, his two siblings tragically died of consumption, and he returned home. Devoting himself to helping his local church and the poor, he became a vicar's warden and lay reader, and ran a night school for boys. A keen natural historian and gardener since childhood, he set about creating gardens from dull Victorian parkland at Myddelton House.

He especially loved nature's eccentricities, growing plants such as the corkscrew hazel *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' in an area he called 'the lunatic asylum'. Bowles dedicated much of his life to transforming these gardens with his love of unusual and exotic plants. He travelled widely with many eminent plant hunters, and successfully grew many strange, rare and difficult plants. Visitors came from afar to admire them - many left with bulbs, roots, cuttings or seeds. He gave plants to friends and great gardeners, who bred new varieties - no wonder so many plants were named after him.



ABOVE *Viola* 'Bowles' Black', one of many plants named after E A Bowles.

He gave plants to friends and great gardeners, who bred new varieties - no wonder so many plants were named after him

In 1914, returning home via France, he was taken with a periwinkle in a churchyard in La Grave. He brought a few runners home, and the next year was rewarded with beautiful flowers. His friend and nurseryman Amos Perry grew it commercially, calling it *Vinca minor* 'Bowles's Variety' (now called *Vinca minor* 'La Grave').

A number of Bowles' plants became famous through Perry, who was given several specimens from Myddleton, and named many new introductions in Bowles' honour, as did others in the trade. In 1901, he launched a little black viola, seeds of which had come to Myddleton from a friend, and called it *Viola* 'Bowles's Black'.

Many of the most famous plants raised by Bowles do not bear his name. Crocuses were a great passion, and he selected very good seedlings of *Crocus chrysanthus*, naming them after birds, such as 'Snow Bunting' and 'Yellowhammer'. The best known - *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' - he almost certainly never grew. He never mentioned it in the three books he wrote about his garden. He wrote many books, articles and papers about plants, and did hundreds of botanical paintings.

Bowles became an RHS member in 1897, serving on 18 committees, including being chairman of the Daffodil & Tulip Committee from 1911 until he died in 1954. He was a member of the RHS Council from 1908 until his death, with only a few years' break along the way. And he was RHS vice-president from 1926 to 1954. In 1916, he received the Victoria Medal of Honour, the RHS' highest accolade. Part of RHS Garden Wisley was named Bowles' Corner, and planted with more than 150 plants, shrubs and trees which he grew at Myddleton.

His great-great nephew, Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, is now president of the E A Bowles Society, set up to further interest in his life and work. ◆

IMAGE/GAP - TIM GAINEY



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Priorwood Garden has many borders and beds filled with a vast array of plants. Many make excellent dried flowers, which are then sold in the garden's shop.

PRESERVED to perfection

Cut flowers are a growing trend, and dried flowers are also having a comeback. We asked the dried flower specialist at Priorwood in Scotland to explain how it's done →

PHOTOGRAPHS RAY COX | **WORDS** VERONICA PEERLESS



There's a saying at Priorwood Garden that the moment a flower reaches its peak, it gets its head chopped off. The garden specialises in producing flowers for drying, and they must be picked right at their peak. But there must also be plenty for visitors to the garden to enjoy. 'It's a delicate balancing act,' says dried flower specialist Andrew Leitch.

The garden is still faithful to its original 1970s layout, comprising a 30m herbaceous border; biennial, hardy and half-hardy annual beds; an allium bed; and mixed shrub and perennial borders. It produces a range of dried blooms, petals, foliage and seedheads, all sold in the garden shop.

Most blooms are picked in full flower, but some - such as helichrysum - are picked when only the two outer layers of petals are open, and others - such as hydrangea - just before the flowers within the bracts go over. They are cut on a dry day. Once the foliage has been removed, the stems are hung upside down on wire coat hangers, bound with elastic bands. 'The stems shrink as they dry, and the bands shrink with them.' This weather-dependent process can be a challenge. 'We know it's a good year if we run out of hangers and bands!' says Andrew.

Double peonies are sought after - they have a ruffled, crumpled, tissue-paper look

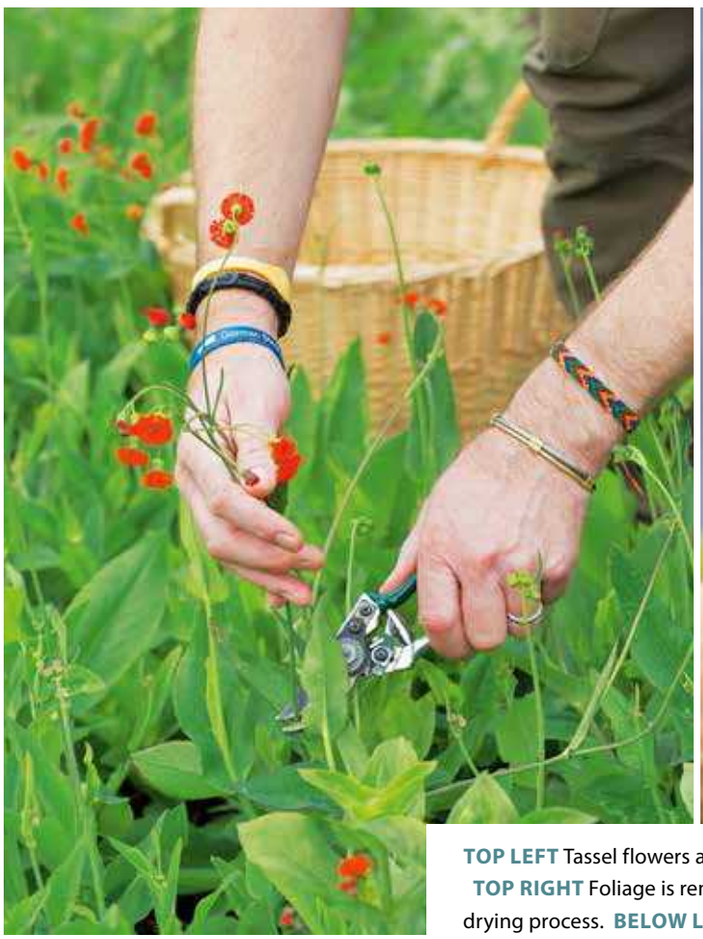
It's a balancing act that has worked well for decades. The garden was originally a kitchen garden, and was bought by the National Trust for Scotland in 1974, aided by its former owner, Jill Currie, partly to stop it being used as a car park for Melrose Abbey. The garden was leased to Bettina, Lady Thomson, who, with little money, and helped by volunteers, created the dried flower garden.

ABOVE Priorwood Garden was once part of the grounds of nearby Melrose Abbey. It was formerly the kitchen garden for Priorwood House, built in the Victorian era. The house is now a youth hostel.

The flowers are then air dried in a drying room, out of direct sunlight. They are dried upside down to keep the stems straight, but there are exceptions - achilleas, for example, can be dried upright, in an inch or so of water. 'You might have noticed that some plants, such as hydrangea, do this anyway in a vase,' says Andrew. The same goes for gypsophila and statice.

A surprising number of flowers can be dried - alliums, members of the thistle family such as cardoons and echinops, *Alchemilla mollis* and achillea, which are especially good, plus old favourites like statice and helichrysum. Double peonies (single types do not dry well) are sought after - 'they have a ruffled, crumpled, tissue-paper look' - along with delphiniums. Pastel flowers go paler when dry, but deeper colours such as dark blue, red and yellow go a couple of shades darker.

As a general rule, the 'fleshier' the flower petals, the less likely they are to dry well - lilies fall into this category, as do hellebores, which dry well initially, →





TOP LEFT Tassel flowers are harvested for drying. **TOP RIGHT** Foliage is removed to speed up the drying process. **BELOW LEFT** Stems are tied with elastic bands, which shrink with the stems. **BELOW RIGHT** Flowers are hung upside down in order to keep the stems straight.





but 'reabsorb', or go soft, after a few months. There are exceptions, though, including the aforementioned alliums, hydrangeas and delphiniums.

Andrew and his team also use specialist techniques, including glycerine drying, traditionally used on beech leaves. It keeps the leaves supple. 'It is especially good for deciduous trees, although it works well on some plants too, including *Alchemilla mollis*.' The technique involves making a solution of two parts boiling water to one part glycerine, smashing the stems to aid absorption, then standing the stems in around 4cm of the glycerine mixture for three weeks.

Another technique is sand or dessicant drying, which involves gently covering blooms with sand on a tray, then putting the tray in a 'hot cupboard', heated to around 32°C, for about a week. Trumpet gentians, roses, small delphiniums and pastel-coloured achilleas can be dried this way. 'Done properly, it makes the flower look fresh,' explains Andrew. 'Peonies look spectacular, but it's labour intensive - each flowerhead takes an hour to do, and if there is any moisture at all in the flower, it will rot.'

There is a big demand for the dried blooms, with customers travelling long distances to collect them

Most flowers take up to four weeks to dry, and should last two to five years in a vase that is placed out of direct sunlight. Helichrysum lasts longer, while solidago only lasts a year or so.

Dried-flower arranging is a 'dying art' according to Andrew, but the shop sells ready-made arrangements for customers to take home. And there is a big demand for the blooms, with people travelling long distances to collect them. 'We don't have many peonies this year due to the damp weather, but I know they'll all sell - many are already spoken for.'





ABOVE Zinnias are sand dried in a kitchen baking tray; the tray is placed in a 'hot cupboard' for around a week. **BELOW LEFT** The drying room. **BELOW RIGHT** Andrew has worked at Priorwood since 1992.

Priorwood Garden & Dried Flower Shop, Melrose, Scottish Borders TD6 9PX. Check the website for exact opening days and times. Tel: +44 (0)1896 822493. www.nts.org.uk/Property/Priorwood-Garden-and-Dried-Flower-Shop



ANDREW'S TIPS FOR DRYING YOUR OWN FLOWERS

- **Look around your garden** - you're bound to have lots of suitable flowers. Good, reliable plants include alliums, echinops, *Alchemilla mollis*, achillea, hydrangea and statice.
- **Most flowers need to be picked at their peak** - but not all. Don't pick hydrangeas too early - the flowers at the centre of the bract should have gone over. Pick anaphalis as soon as you see the first piece of yellow in the centre, and helichrysum when the two outer layers of petals have opened.
- **If flowers don't dry well**, you may have picked them at the wrong time. Try more than once. Make sure you pick the flowers on a dry day.
- **Dry upside down**, out of direct sunlight, somewhere dry such as an airing cupboard, loft or shed.
- **Do not let plants over dry**, otherwise they will become brittle and too delicate to work with. For most plants, test a stem above the elastic band tie. If it snaps off easily, it's ready.
- **When arranging with dried flowers**, remember they are more fragile than fresh ones. You'll have less foliage to use as filler, and the flowers will have lost a lot of bulk, so you'll need lots of them.

PURE ROMANCE



IMAGE/MARIANNE MAJERUS

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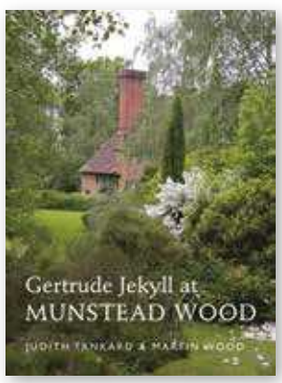
THE REVIEWER

Garden designer George Carter tells us about his new book, and we've got a sneak preview of Kew's first literary festival, as well as our pick of new books

BOOK REVIEWS

Gertrude Jekyll At Munstead Wood

(Pimpernell Press, £25)



Many books have been written about Gertrude Jekyll - the garden designer who was born in 1843, yet still influences the way we garden today. This book is not a biography, nor an examination of her contribution to garden design. Rather, it explores her life and work in the home and garden she created at Munstead Wood in Surrey.

The authors have carefully pieced together information gleaned from Jekyll's many articles and books, plus garden plans, photographs, scrapbooks and letters, many of which were saved by the American landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand in the 1940s. They also draw on the memories of those who knew her, including Sir Edwyn Lutyens, William Robinson and Vita Sackville-West.

The result is a vivid picture of the woman herself, not only a talented garden designer, but an accomplished writer, painter, photographer and craftswoman - permanently hard up, sometimes a little cranky, always entertaining. It details the development of the garden, worked on for years before the Lutyens-designed house was built, with much input from the knowledgeable and demanding Jekyll. Fascinatingly, it also details daily life at Munstead Wood - the solemn, long-serving housekeeper, the eccentric meals and the daily work of the gardeners.

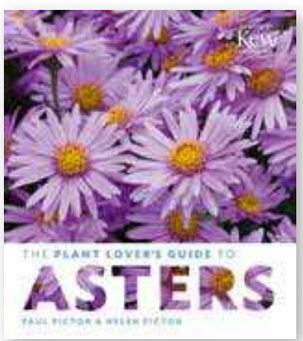
Many of the photographs in this revised edition were taken by Jekyll herself, and have never been reproduced before. They offer a fascinating insight into the development of the garden and the simple yet comfortable decor of her Arts & Crafts-style house, plus the many architectural and rural details of her beloved West Surrey.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, not only because I will happily read about other people's homes and gardens, but also it's an insight into a way of life that is lost forever, a world without mass production, fast cars, computers and mobile phones, and where - to paraphrase the famous poem - there was honey still for tea.

Reviewed by Veronica Peerless

The Plant Lover's Guide To Asters

by Helen & Paul Picton (Timber Press, £17.99)



I'm a big fan of *The Plant Lover's Guide* series. Rather than a welter of wildly different plants competing for the reader's attention - resulting in none making any more impact on the reader than any other - these guides allow us to immerse ourselves in every aspect of one particular plant, giving us a fully rounded picture.

There's a soothing sense of continuity as you flick through the pages of each of these guides, a common thread that helps the reader appreciate the diversity of the genus, its quirks and eccentricities, and the nuances between different varieties.

Who better to guide us on this journey than father-and-daughter team Paul and Helen Picton? They represent a proud Michelmas daisy dynasty stretching back for many decades. The Pictons hold the National Plant Collection of autumn-flowering Asters at their well-known garden at Old Court Nurseries in Malvern, featuring more than 400 varieties. Paul is a specialist grower of asters, and his daughter Helen joined the family business after completing a botany degree. She now works full-time with asters, and also lectures and gives talks. So as readers, we are in exceedingly good hands.

In this book, they highlight 100 species and cultivars that are readily available in garden centres. As nursery owners and gardeners themselves, they clearly understand the frustration of being tantalised by a fabulous plant in print, only to not be able to buy it, and that's a big plus point for this book.

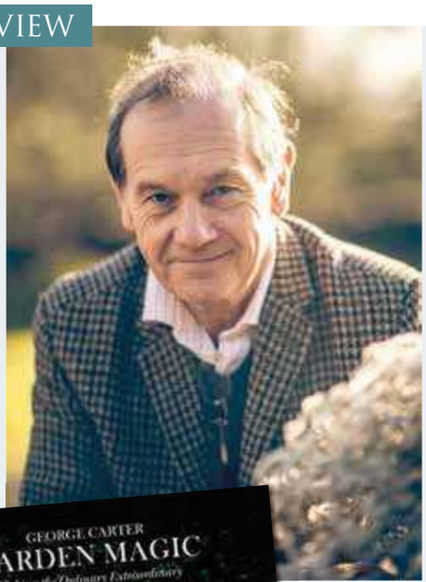
The reader is equipped with everything they need to know about growing, caring for and designing with asters, as well as suggestions of companion plants.

The photography in each edition in *The Plant Lover's Guide* series is always strong, and this book is no exception - there are hundreds of colour photographs here to dazzle and inspire the home gardener.

Reviewed by Sarah Feeley

INTERVIEW

We spoke to garden designer George Carter about his new book *Garden Magic* (Double-Barrelled Books, £25).



What's the idea behind your new book?
I've used my own garden and the things in it - from trellis to containers and plants to lighting - to suggest ways in which any garden can be improved on a very simple basis. You don't have to know anything about gardening, or have a large garden. The ideas are quick fixes for any garden that will help make it look interesting and different.

What's your garden design style?
It is informed by gardens of the past, but a lighter, pared-down, 21st-century version. It is a modern update on the many delightful ideas to be found in historic gardens: simple in basic form, but with one or two ornamental focal points. It is a style that doesn't really rely too much on colour, making the most of different shades of green and contrasting textures.



In the same way that a room decorated in neutral colours can have the odd dash of bright colour within it, so in a primarily green garden you can introduce small, unexpected accents of colour or ornament that give it zing.

How can the reader replicate ideas from the book in their home plot?
The book looks at each area of the garden in detail, and - to make it helpful for gardens of any size - divides it up into sections. Each section shows a different salient feature of a garden, broken down into subdivisions, offering ideas that readers wouldn't necessarily think of to help create instant improvement, such as how to frame a scene or create a sense of surprise. Taking up the theme of gardens being outdoor rooms, the book shows simple adaptations with a strong DIY element, customising ordinary objects.

The book's subtitle is 'Making the ordinary extraordinary' - what is the secret to this?
One way is to assemble found objects and building materials in inventive ways. I don't disregard 'naff' objects - off-the-peg Christmas decorations, for example, often have potential. It's a question of thinking of their use in an unusual way. You could change the surface or texture, or add gilding and change colours. Look for colours that are not too dissonant with the colours of nature - a closely toned group can be effective.

Also worth investigating are second hand objects - not necessarily those that started life as ornamental. I've tried to use objects that are readily available, such as large-diameter pipes or ball-shaped valve floats, which can be put together and homogenised by colour. Ready-cut pressure-treated timber, various forms of ironmongery and garden centre trellis are the sorts of raw materials that can be transformed.

Kew up for literary festival garden stars

Right on KEW

Horticultural luminaries like Carol Klein, James Wong, Alys Fowler and Thomas Pakenham will star in the first ever literary festival at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Tickets are on sale now for Write On Kew, which will run from Thursday 24 to Monday 28 September.

As well as big names from the gardening world, also on the bill will be famous authors and writers spanning different literary genres, starring in talks and events.

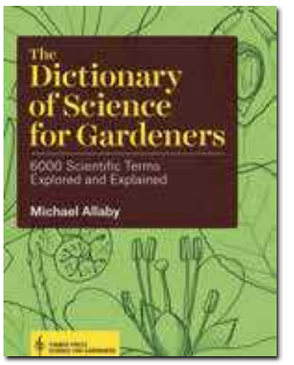
These will include Bill Bryson, Louis de Bernières, Michael Morpurgo, Margaret Atwood, Hanif Kureishi, Melvyn Bragg, A S Byatt and Dan Cruickshank.

To book tickets, visit www.kew.org

COMPILED BY SARAH FEELEY
GEORGE CARTER PORTRAIT/HARRY CORY WRIGHT

SEPTEMBER'S FRESH PICKINGS

The Dictionary of Science for Gardeners



(Timber Press, £25)

From 'abscission' (a plant's rejection of an organ) to 'zoochary' (the dispersal of seeds by animals), this new dictionary defines more than 6,000 scientific words of particular interest to gardeners. Dive into this authoritative tome when you encounter a term you don't know, or aren't sure about. A must for real gardeners.

Spotting and Jotting Guide

by Matt Sewell
(Ebury Press, £6.99)



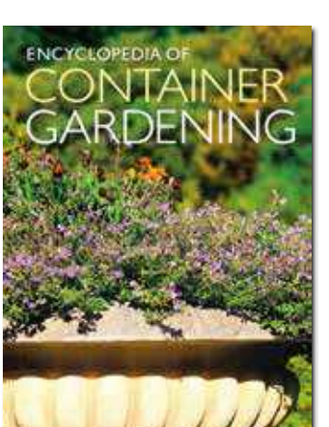
A passionate twitcher since boyhood, talented illustrator Matt Sewell's affection for - and knowledge of - all things feathered leaps off the page in this this charming little book.

It is the perfect size to pop in your pocket and tick off each bird you spot. He has captured the distinctive character of each bird in his bold paintings and witty captions.

Kids will love this book - but so will adults with sense of fun.

Encyclopedia of Container Gardening

(Red Lemon Press, £19.99)



Written with the novice gardener in mind, the pace of this book may jar with experienced gardeners. But this is a solid, no-nonsense, back-to-basics reference book covering all aspects of container gardening and packed with advice. And none of us knows it all!

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Spring Reach Nursery, Long Reach, Ockham, Surrey GU23 6PG

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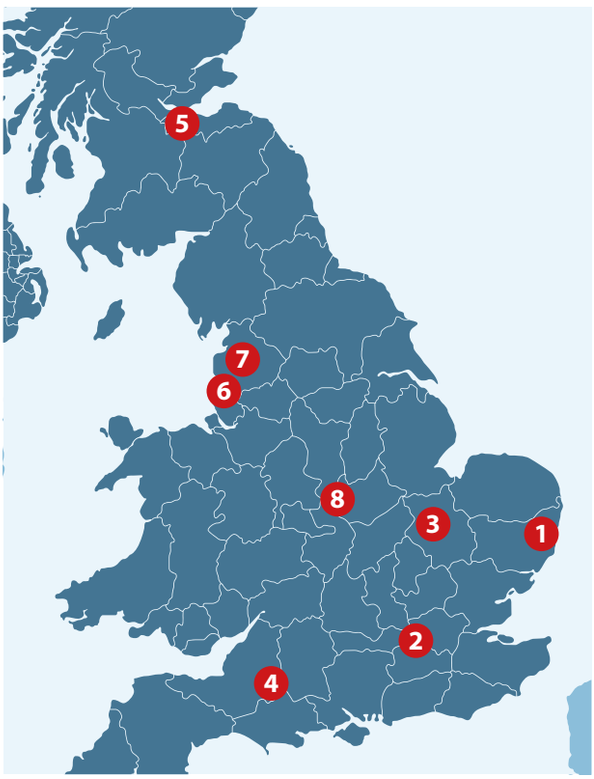
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MY FAVOURITE THINGS

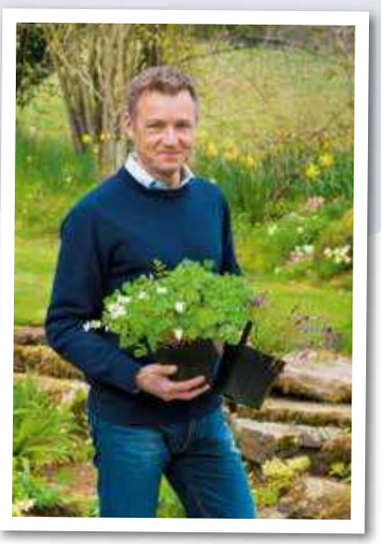
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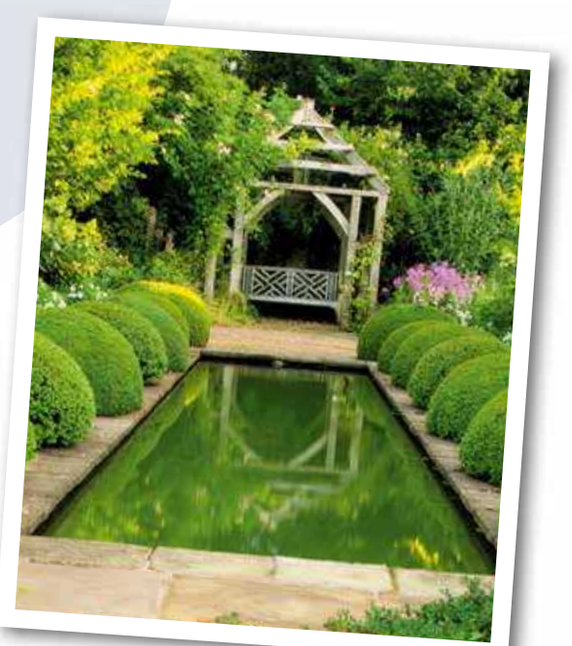
Garden designer, broadcaster and author
Chris tells us all about his top places and plants

The thing I desire most for my garden is a glasshouse. I have had many before, but in my current garden it's the one thing I am really missing.

My own garden is home, and that's always special for me, as it's a place to retreat and recharge the creative energies, which I think everyone can relate to. It's also a changing tapestry and a place that I am constantly working with and evolving. And yes... I do still have some plants still to plant!

My 'desert island' tool is a funny artisan tool custom made for me. It's a combination of a small spade and a pickaxe. It sounds a bit odd, but I find it invaluable.







It's difficult to choose my favourite plant – it all depends on the moment and the season. It's an almost impossible question to ask a plantsman! This month, it would be the dahlia. There are so many colours and shapes that I defy someone not to find one that sings to them.

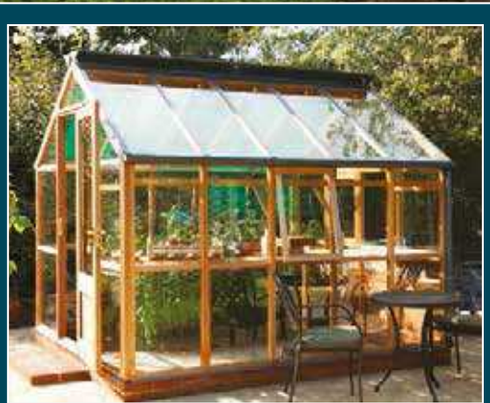
My favourite garden would certainly be Wollerton Old Hall in Shropshire. It's an absolute delight, and I make sure I go every year – in fact, I will be there in October giving a talk.

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